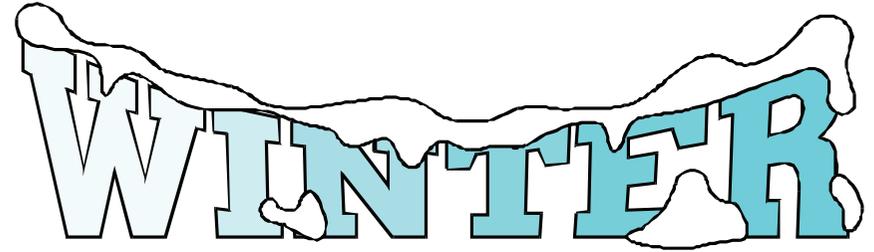


I believe that this verse in Genesis is telling us that we are going to experience all sorts of changes in our spiritual life. There will be states of winter and states of spring; phases of summer and phases of autumn. Maybe we feel we should always be in a spring or summer state and think we are failing if we seem to be winter like in our spiritual outlook on life. But no, the fact is that we will experience different phases in our spiritual growth and they are all important for us. They provide a contrast so that we can better see the way we should live. The winter state of being “wrapped up in your own concerns and worries” can and will pass and a new ‘spring’ state of being “concerned for the welfare of others” will take its place.

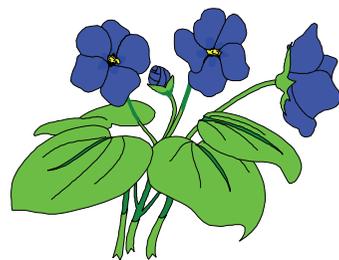
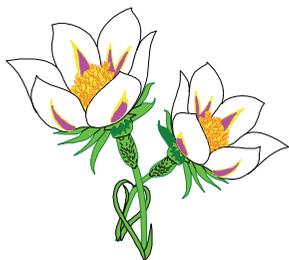
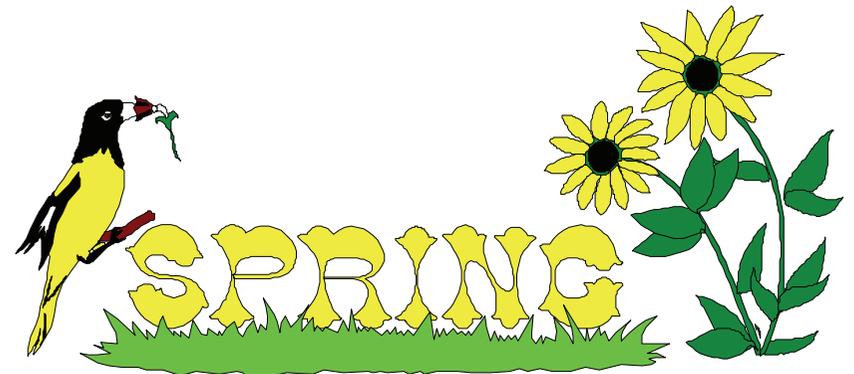
The transition from winter to spring takes place with just a little more warmth and a little more light and then gradually all the wonder of new life unfolds. And that is what it takes to move from a spiritual state of winter into the spiritual state of spring. Just a little love (warmth) received or given and a little more understanding (light) of what life is really about can make all the difference. Sometimes we can make this transition seemingly on our own and lift ourselves out of winter and into spring. But at other times we need help from those around us to encourage us to leave behind our cold and dark feelings and thoughts. And of course we should be ready to recognise when others are in a ‘winter’ state and help them to return once again to ‘spring’.

But whether we are being helped to move forward into ‘spring’, or we are helping others, we need to bear in mind that it is really God’s life in us that is fulfilling his promise that *“While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.”*

From



to



From Winter to Spring

How do you feel about the changing seasons? Do you look forward to each season as it unfolds, enjoying the different look and feel of the world around you, or do you only like the spring or summer?

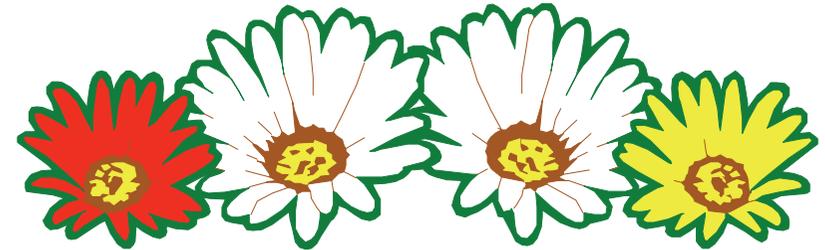
We are very fortunate in this country to have seasons that are noticeably different, although it is true that sometimes we seem to have weather that doesn't really fit the current season. But why are we fortunate?

Well I think there are two good reasons to be grateful for the variety of our seasons. Firstly, and most obviously, they provide a contrast. How nice it is to have a cold and grey winter followed by the increasing brightness of spring, or to have a hot summer followed by the wonderful colours of autumn. But secondly the changing seasons can give us a wonderful picture of how our inner being, or the world of our spirit, can go through all sorts of changes as we struggle to grow spiritually.

Winter can be cold, grey, wet and quite a depressing season. It is the time when we have the least light and the least warmth, although we can be blessed with some wonderful cold but brilliantly sunny days. As I write this it is a cold and grey day with the only colour coming from evergreen bushes and a few remaining berries. In winter we have to wrap up warmly when we go out and we are usually glad to get back inside if it is raining hard.

Now think about the times when you feel like a cold grey winter's day. You don't feel like doing anything, you've lost interest in those around you and you are wrapped up in your own concerns and worries. And on top of that you can't see a way out of your current state of life. In short there is no warmth or light in your life, just like a winter's day. Sadly many people seem to get trapped in this state. They feel unloved and unwanted and see no purpose in their lives. Just occasionally they have a better day and some brightness fills their lives but they soon drift back into the cold and gloom. But aren't we all like this from time to time. None of us escapes the spiritual season of winter.

Spring brings with it increasing warmth and increasing light. The days are longer and new life breaks forth all around us in the vivid displays of daffodils and crocuses, new leaves on the trees and baby animals and birds. Of course there are April showers to contend with and some days can be quite cold, with frost and even snow. But overall spring brings forth a feeling of light, warmth and well-being. What a contrast to the short cold and dark days of winter.



And what a contrast it is when you feel like a spring day. You are keen to do things and to be concerned for the welfare of others. You feel loved and you see you have a purpose in life and are keen to get on with it. In short there is light and warmth in your life and new ideas and new feelings abound. Of course you are not going to feel like this all the time, some periods of cold-heartedness take over from time to time but these phases are short lived. Spiritually you are in spring.

God gives us a wonderful promise in the Bible about the seasons:

“While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.”
Genesis 8:22

At first sight this seems an obvious promise. Of course the seasons will go on changing from one to next in a regular cycle; we know we can rely on that!

But is this statement in Genesis just talking about the seasons in the world around us? Well, no, it is far more importantly telling us something about the ‘seasons’ of our spirit, the changes in our inner life that can take our thinking and feeling from the depths of winter through to summer and back again.