

## *God in the wilderness, God in the city*

**A** Canadian aboriginal, I have always loved the Manitoba wilderness where I was born. I loved to follow my dad into the bush on hunting or fishing trips. But when I was five years old, my family moved to the city of Winnipeg. How I missed the freedom and natural beauty of my ancestral lands! The city seemed noisy and crowded. I felt closed in, restricted.

My parents insisted that I attend Sunday school regularly. I didn't like it. In fact, I hated being forced to do anything. But by the age of ten, I had "prayed the prayer", asking Jesus to come into my life. It didn't mean very much to me at the time, though. And later, when my older sister took me to church, I learned the basics of the faith, but they didn't touch my heart.

I started doing stuff I shouldn't do. Sometimes I would escape the wilderness. It was the only place where I felt at peace with God, experienced the awesomeness of what God had created, and longed for what was missing in my life. But then I would go back to the city, and my drinking and "fooling around" would increase. I lost my job after an workplace accident and a slow and painful recovery. I again escaped to the wilderness, but when I returned to the city, the bad habits and self-pity returned as well.

But that accident had the hand of God in it. "I can't keep on living like this," I told myself. And so I called out: "God, You've got to make yourself real to me". The Lord told me to commit myself to regular attendance at a church I'd visited from time to time, and I obeyed. From that point onward, the prayer I had prayed as a child held increasingly more meaning.

I began to realize that communion with God is like visiting a friend. He showed me that I don't have to go into nature to be with him. I still love listening to the wind rustling through the trees. I dream of having my own little log cabin beside a lake, with a stream flowing clean and clear, and a meadow to roam in. But none of these are essential to enjoying the presence of the One who created them. He is always with me, and for me, in any place and any situation.

— *By Beryl Raven*

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