

Hot or cold?



I am a person who very easily feels the cold. When I go outside my legs feet and hands are like ice. When I wake up in the night my nose is so cold that I have to rub it to get it warm again.

used to say about our dog She used to say that if a dog had a cold healthy. I do not know if that was correct think I am! There is one thing that I have definitely decided and that is that I will not be signing up to go on an expedition to the South Pole as I will be staying at home where I am snug and warm!



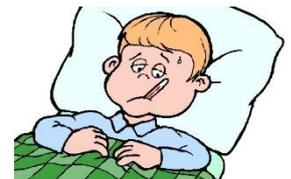
I am reminded of what my Mam because his nose was always cold. nose then it was a sign that he was or not so maybe I am more healthy than I



As I was thinking about being cold, my thoughts turned to how we can go cold spiritually. By this I mean that our relationship with God cools off for some reason or other. I have known people in church who have been really enthusiastic, taking part in the services, praying and volunteering for the various jobs that need to be done and, as we would say, 'On fire for God', but, then two or three years later they are no longer attending church. I have found that there are a number of reasons why people stop attending church. Here are some of those reasons and I am sure that you may be able to think of others.



- No longer able to attend because of ill health.
- Caring for someone else who is not well.
- A close bereavement with which they are not able to come to terms.



- Lack of transport.
- Someone in church said something hurtful to them.
- Take children/grandchildren to football/dancing etc..
- Have to work on a Sunday.
- So under stress at work in the week that they need to 'flake out' at the week-end.
- More recently – Trying to shield from covid.

I would say that attending a Bible-based church is one of the main things that helps to keep Christians in a close relationship with God. The writer of Hebrews tells us not to neglect meeting together in order that we might encourage each other. In this way we are much more likely to continue to attend church and grow closer to God as the encouragement, along with the singing/worship and the preaching from God's Word become part of our normal lives that can help to prevent us from going off track.



**Growing Cold:**

For those who are unable to attend services, for whatever reason, it is much more difficult to avoid growing cold spiritually. I am sure that many of you will have heard the illustration of how a burning piece of coal taken out of the fire and placed on the hearth in isolation, will soon stop burning. Some people may be able to cope with the isolation from other Christians, but for most, it is something that has to be worked at in order to maintain the same spiritual level in our lives. There can be a gradual deterioration that at first may not even be noticed.



### An example of a downward spiral:

Attends church most weeks, reads Bible and prays every day.

- ↓ Attends every other week, starts to miss Bible reading.
- ↓ Attends once a month, very rarely reads Bible, does not get round to praying every day.
- ↓ Attends once a quarter, spends very little time in prayer.
- ↓ Stops attending church, Bible reading and praying – Unless an emergency crops up!



Once a person has stopped attending church it can be extremely difficult and embarrassing for them to start to come back again. I have seen times when a person has very gingerly come back into church after a long period of absence, only to be greeted by someone saying, “Hello stranger” instead of, “Hello, how lovely to see you.” They may need someone to sit by them and help them to feel welcome and as if they have really been missed.

Since the beginning of the pandemic there have been some who were suddenly plunged into non-church attendance, especially for health reasons, and have been isolated from church because of not having a computer or ipad. I know from personal experience that it may not be their choice to miss services and can be very upsetting and frustrating. It has now been over two years for some since being able to attend church and that is a long time. Please try and encourage someone if you know that this applies to them – even if you do not agree with their reasons. Distancing, signing in and masks may no longer be a legal requirement but some may not yet be ready to cope with their removal. God has made us all individuals and we do not all move at the same pace.

### Suggestions to help if you are unable to get back into church:

Try to watch a service regularly on the internet or television.

Keep in touch with another Christian/Christians by 'phone.

Get back into the habit of reading your Bible every day, even if it is only 2 or 3 verses. You may need to work at it if you do not feel very enthusiastic!

Try to talk to God on a regular basis.

If you are on Facebook keep up with the news about others in the church; some of them may need your prayers for some reason or other.

Do not be discouraged if you are not always able to meet your goals. God knows exactly how you feel.



Try to make this your goal:

**HOT**



**COLD**