

I had a picture at a Monday morning prayer meeting. So that you may understand the context, we pray for the Wyre Forest area at these meetings and we were being then led to pray for the churches in the area. The picture goes like this:

It was a little bit like an old fashioned Christmas card scene which, being of a certain age, was my experience anyway as a child in Britain. It was a bitterly cold early evening and pitch black. A man walked along the pavement hunched against the cold. He slowly passed a leaded window, the curtains were drawn back and inside, straight ahead of him, he could see a blazing fire, the flames tall and dancing as it burned merrily in the grate. There were people in there, a family presumably, of differing ages, and they were laughing and chatting. The scene was one of warmth and comfort. The man glanced in, thinking how good it would be to warm his icy hands against the fire for a moment but he walked on, his head held low.

I was transported back to those days, and I felt like I was one of those in the room. The winters were very cold those years ago and there was no central heating. You could be walking outside miserable due to the cold and, seeing a sight like this made you long for a generous soul to invite you into a sitting room where there was one such roaring fire. Often the rest of the room would remain quite chilly and you made a bee-line for the open fire which seemed to have a welcoming life of its own, extended your arms and hands as near to it as you dared and felt the soothing heat fill your chilled body. Often, a few minutes or so would be all you needed to warm up.

I felt an overwhelming sadness at this picture, understanding how the cold outsider might have felt. I didn't know whether he didn't want to go in because he felt unworthy, not interested or scared, or what; or whether he couldn't go in because he was not invited, etc, etc. For instance, there was no door in the picture, just a window. All I know is that he represented the unsaved hordes outside God's Kingdom while we're inside enjoying the presence of the Lord.

*Josie Edwards*