

# Groundhog Day

According to tradition, today, February 2, is the date that the groundhog, or woodchuck, wakes up from winter hibernation and comes out of its burrow. The legend says that if the sun shines that day, the groundhog will be scared by its own shadow, return to its burrow, and winter will last another six weeks. If the day is cloudy and the groundhog doesn't see its shadow, it will stay outside and spring will come soon.

Well, you can relax, folks. Punxsutawney Phil, the furry forecaster from Pennsylvania, did not see his shadow this morning. According to German folklore, that means we can expect an early spring instead of six more weeks of winter. More than 15,000 revelers danced or milled about in a misty snow in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, waiting for the prediction. Any Tennessee groundhog poking his head out of his burrow would have had the same prognostication.

For several hundred years, European farmers had similar traditions involving badgers, bears and other animals. Early German settlers brought their custom to Pennsylvania. Plentiful in the Eastern and Midwestern states, the groundhog became the animal linked with our Groundhog Day custom in America. Since 1887, Punxsutawney Phil has been the official weather prophet in well-attended Groundhog Day celebrations in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania.

We've all experienced the desire to hide from circumstances that threaten us, just like the traditional groundhog. Fear is a problem with everyone to some degree. God told Isaiah that the Lord is the only one we are to fear (Isaiah 8:13). Fear will be replaced by faith if we concentrate on pleasing the One who holds our destiny in His hands.

Then we can say with David, "I prayed to the Lord, and He answered me. He freed me from all my fears" (Psalm 34:4).

There is no need to be frightened by scary shadows around us as long as the Son is shining in us.

--Beecher Hunter