

The Practice of the Presence of God

Devotional Book

Arranged and rewritten from the life and writings of

Brother Lawrence

by Ken Bible

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(*THE PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD Devotional Book; 2*)

For centuries, leaders and lay-persons alike have recommended *The Practice of the Presence of God* as a priceless guide to a constant walk with God.

Here a plain and simple man talks with blunt sincerity and realism. He shares how he learned to live all of daily life in a beautiful, close fellowship with God. This is no ivory-tower theological treatise. It is clear and practical advice on the simplicity and joy we can all find in Christ.

Originally published in a series of letters, conversations, and maxims, *The Practice of the Presence of God* here appears in new dress: rewritten for clarity and organized into daily devotional readings.

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About Brother Lawrence

Brother Lawrence was born Nicolas Herman in 1611, in the village of Herimenil in Lorraine, France. His parents were peasants, so his schooling was limited at best.

As a young man, Nicholas fought in the Thirty Years War. But being captured by the Germans and accused of spying, then wounded by the Swedes in a later battle, he turned away from a soldier's life.

Soon he was employed as a footman to M. William de Fieubet, treasurer of the King of France. Nicholas recalled of himself that "he was a clumsy fellow who used to break everything". His time as a soldier and a footman totaled about 18 years.

Around the time he had entered the army, at age 18, he had experienced a spiritual awakening. One winter he saw a tree stripped of its leaves. He considered that soon afterwards, these leaves would reappear, followed by flowers and fruit. This gave him "a lofty awareness of the providence and power of God that never left him."

Thus when his service as a footman ended, Nicholas sought spiritual fulfillment in the solitude of a hermit's life. Soon realizing this wasn't for him, in 1649, he offered himself to the Order of "Barefooted" Carmelites in Paris. The Carmelites were one of the most austere monastic communities, and the barefooted Carmelites practiced even more severe self-denial.

Nicholas was accepted into the order as a lay brother and was given the name Lawrence of the Resurrection.

Early on, Brother Lawrence was assigned kitchen duty, a work to which he had a natural aversion. But having decided to do everything for the love of God, he prayerfully went about his duties and for 15 years "found great ease in doing things" there.

Later, Lawrence was given the task of cobbling shoes, likely because he was crippled in one leg. He enjoyed this work but said that he remained ready to leave the work for whatever task he was assigned. His only desire was to find joy in doing little things for the love of God.

By his own testimony, Brother Lawrence spent the last 40 years of his life in the practice of the presence of God—that is, in silent and intimate conversation with Him. A plain, blunt man with a rough exterior, unlearned and living in total

obscurity, daily performing the most menial tasks, he became known and respected by high and low alike.

His life was a shining example of holiness. He had a frank, open manner that inspired confidence and candor. Many sought to learn the source of his Christlike spirit. They found his wisdom practical, unadorned, and to the point, yet profound and beautifully broad in viewpoint.

His classic work, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, is actually a compilation of letters, conversations, and maxims, much of it recorded and preserved by those who knew him.

He died on Monday, February 12, 1691, at age 80. While on his deathbed, Lawrence was asked how his mind was busied. “I am doing what I’ll do throughout all eternity—blessing God, praising God, adoring Him, giving Him the love of all my heart. It is our one business, my brothers, to worship and love Him, without thinking of anything else.”

I am with you always. (Matthew 28:20)

God Is Here

God is always with us. We don't need to search for Him. He is always here. How often we forget this wonderful reality!

Would you like to live every moment conscious of God, always standing before Him, always looking into His face?

Practice the presence of God.

Turn to Him frequently in the midst of your day.

Talk to Him.

Thank Him.

Do each simple act *for Him*.

As you do, you'll come to know Him better. Soon all of life will be filled with acts of love, trust, and worship.

I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness.

(Jeremiah 31:3)

Necessary and Easy

Practicing the presence of God is for everyone. It is both necessary and easy.

Talking with God is the most holy, the most universal, and the most necessary practice in the spiritual life. We can speak humbly and lovingly to Him at all times, wherever we are. There are no rules or procedures to follow. Just talk to Him honestly and believe that He hears you.

Though church is important, you don't have to be in church to talk to Him. Make your heart a chapel where you may escape from time to time to talk with Him.

Everyone can live in close, constant fellowship with the Living God.

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. (Matthew 7:7)

Patience and Persistence

You will not learn to consistently practice God's presence overnight. Like any good habit, its formation requires persistence and patience.

But remember, neither skill nor knowledge is necessary for us to come to God. We just need a heart determined to turn only to Him, to beat only for Him, and to love only Him.

Do you truly believe that God's will is your highest good? Then trust Him. Seek Him. Realize your constant need for Him. Feed your hunger for Him.

Don't be discouraged when you forget to turn to God. Ask His forgiveness and His help. He is glad to give them both.

I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. (Psalm 73:23)

The Fruit of Relationship

There is no life happier or more full of delight than the life spent in constant fellowship with God.

As we speak to Him freely, as we trust Him for everything, as every deed is done for Him, a relationship grows. We come to know the Living God in a personal way. Though our daily life is outwardly as ordinary as ever, it overflows with acts of love and worship, contrition and trust, petition and thanksgiving.

Yes, life in God is rich with blessings. But don't pursue Him for the good that He gives. Practice His presence for *His* sake. Come to Him because you love Him and trust Him and desire to please Him in all you do.

The righteous will live by faith. (Romans 1:17)

Active Faith

One of the first benefits of practicing God's presence is faith. As we nurture a constant, personal relationship with God, faith becomes more alive and active in every area of life.

This is particularly true in times of need. As we turn to God immediately with every concern, He provides for us completely:

- strength in temptation;
- assurance in uncertainty;
- wisdom and patience for relationships;
- forgiveness for our failures.

When we know that God is present, we call on Him freely and with confidence, and obtain from Him all that we need.

When you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. (Matthew 6:7-8)

Openness and Simplicity

Always be open with God. Act very simply towards Him. Speak frankly. Avoid being vague or artificial.

He is closer to you than you can possibly understand. He makes His home in your innermost being, beneath your words and half-formed thoughts.

If you believe that, honor Him with honesty. When you need guidance, ask for it. When you're worried, tell Him and ask for His help. When a task seems overwhelming, express your dependence on Him. When things go well, thank Him and give Him the glory.

I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. (Matthew 11:29-30)

Easy to Please

Do you want to please God? He doesn't ask much:

Turn your thoughts to Him from time to time.

Do a simple act of worship.

Offer your sufferings to Him.

Thank Him for His goodness, past and present.

When you're troubled, find comfort in Him.

At meals, when in society or when alone, lift your heart to Him. The least little remembrance always pleases Him. You don't need to cry loudly. He is right there with you.

Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

Pray Continually

Is your “prayer time” frustrating for you? Do you struggle with a wandering mind? The harder you try to pull in your wayward thoughts, the more they scatter in every direction!

If this is you, the solution can be simple: develop the habit of continual conversation with God. Whether at prayer or at work, turn your heart and mind to God. Thank Him. Praise Him. Ask for His help to do whatever needs to be done.

Don't just store up things to pray about. Talk to Him on the spot. As you learn to speak to Him throughout the day, your times of special prayer will become more easy and natural as well.

As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. (Psalm 103:13-14)

Distractions

Has something distracted you from your continual conversation with God? Don't blame yourself or worry. Simply turn to God again, no matter what you are doing. No activity need separate us from Him, as long as our heart is still His.

Continue to displace meaningless distractions with simple prayer. Make yourself always His. Lift up your heart to Him. Turn a loving gaze toward Him. Speak to Him with words like, "See, my God, I am entirely Yours," or "Lord, make me pleasing to Your heart."

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. (Psalm 46:1)

Continual Dependence

Life is full of perils and hidden reefs on which we will shipwreck without the continual help of God. We must pray for His help unceasingly.

But how can we pray to Him unless we are with Him? How can we be with Him unless we are often thinking of Him? How can we be often thinking of Him without forming the holy habit of doing so? Turned to Him, resting in His presence, we can there ask for the grace we need each moment of life.

We live in a world full of evil. Don't be surprised when you hear of some great wickedness. Immediately bring the matter to God, and intercede for the sinner. Then leave it there and continue in His peace, rejoicing in Him.

My soul finds rest in God alone. (Psalm 62:1)

Deep Peace

As we develop a habit of continual prayer, our relationship with God grows. We are at rest in Him. Our spirit is satisfied in His presence.

In a sense, we live as if it is only God and us in the world. We are always together and converse naturally. We gain a holy freedom in Him. We ask whatever we need, and He pours unexpected graces on us. Our trust deepens. We rejoice with Him in a thousand daily ways.

This communion with God is held in the depths of the soul, at its very center. We can speak to God heart-to-heart in a wonderful peace. Exterior concerns are only a fire of straw: the more they flare, the sooner they are burnt out. Such concerns need not disturb our inner peace.

Surely the LORD is in this place. (Genesis 28:16)

Ever Standing in Your Presence

Ever standing in Your presence,

Ever living face to face,

Ever sharing, ever listening,

Ever open to Your grace.

Ever weak and ever needy,

Ever hungry for Your best,

Ever clinging to Your mercy,

Ever empty, ever blessed.

It's so good to just be near You,

Free to bring You each request,

Simply trusting You as Father,

Free to serve and free to rest.

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Earth has nothing I desire besides you. (Psalm 73:25)

Hunger for God

How can religious people live satisfied without the practice of God's presence?

Can we ever be satisfied without giving ourselves entirely to God, without turning our daily lives toward Him?

We grasp so much for material and worldly goods and receive so little satisfaction from them. Yet we are satisfied with so little of God. God has infinite treasure to give, and we seem contented with only passing moments of inner joy. If we would open ourselves entirely to Him in faith and love, He would flood our souls with His graces.

Let us make this our only concern: to please God. Everything else is a vain waste of time. Wholeheartedly give up all that is not of Him.

I desire to do your will, O my God. (Psalm 40:8)

Decide

Once and for all, decide to trust God. Renounce everything that doesn't lead to Him and doesn't please Him.

Give yourself entirely to Him in every area of life. If you know that His will is always best, seek only His will. Find your happiness in doing His will, whether He leads through suffering or delight. They are both the same if you know His way is best and you trust Him completely.

Picture yourself as a piece of stone, standing motionless before God, the sculptor. Present yourself before Him and ask Him to form His perfect image in you. Let Him chip and polish as He sees necessary. Leave yourself entirely in His hands. Whatever happens, rejoice in the work He is doing.

When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth . . . He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. (John 16:13-14)

Union with God

Union with God is not a feeling. It is not merely an emotion.

Fellowship with God is not brought about by human imagination or understanding.

Rather, as we trust God, He gives us His Spirit to live within us. His Spirit leads us to God and lifts us to Him. He nurtures a desire to love God, to worship Him, to turn our minds and lives to Him more and more.

As we respond to God, a union grows that is beautiful and indefinable. It is peaceful, reverent, loving, personal, and very simple.

I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.

(Romans 12:1)

Give Yourself to Him

We are made for God, and for Him alone.

His love, His wisdom, His will for us are perfect. But He cannot do in us what He wants as long as we are distracted by other desires. To be His, to live in unbroken communion with Him, our hearts must be empty of everything else. Otherwise He cannot act and do there what He pleases.

Trust Him completely. Want only His will. Make Him and His glory the focus of all that you do and say and undertake. Free Him to do and be all that He desires in you.

My eyes are fixed on you, O Sovereign LORD. (Psalm 141:8)

I Fix My Thoughts on You

I fix my thoughts on You,

Holy God, on You;

All my dreams, all my joys—

I have made my choice.

I fix my thoughts on You,

Always, only You.

I am free when I am fixed on You.

Not drained by fear but strong in faith;

Not bound by pride but freed by praise;

My goals set aside, my life's open wide

To be filled by You alone!

I fix my thoughts on You,

Always, only You.

I am free when I am fixed on You.

To me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. (Philippians 1:21)

One Example

When Brother Lawrence was very ill, he was visited by a spiritual leader who asked him which he would choose, to live longer or to go at once to heaven.

Brother Lawrence replied that he would leave the choice to God. As for himself, he had nothing else to do but to wait in peace till God would show him His will.

Such trust in God had brought him to a great indifference about everything else. What freedom! He had no bias, no self-will left, no competing desires. Everything came alike to him, every position in life, every duty. He found God everywhere, as much in the humblest work as in public worship services. He enjoyed perfect peace because he wanted only God.

You fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

(Psalm 16:11)

Joy

The greatest joys of the world can't be compared to those experienced with God. As we feed ourselves on thoughts of Him, as we establish continual conversation with Him, as our relationship grows, we find great joy in simply being with Him.

We embrace Him with all we are. As we do, His love lights a flame of love and joy in the center of our heart.

Our souls find complete satisfaction in their Maker. Lest we should turn again to the things of earth, God is careful to provide our souls with unexpected pleasures and undeserved delights. In His abundance, we need fear nothing nor seek nothing but Him alone.

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men. (Colossians 3:23)

Ordinary Things

For many of us, our first glimpse of God was through the ordinary things of life.

We sensed Him in a person, through something in nature, or through a life situation.

The best path to God is still through ordinary things.

Do you want to set apart your whole life and your whole self for God? Do for God what you would ordinarily do for yourself.

Do you want to reach out to God and fully unite yourself to Him? Use your ordinary occupations and daily obligations. Do each one, not for human respect or personal pleasure, but in glad obedience to God, out of love for Him.

Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Colossians 3:17)

Little Things for God

We search and trouble ourselves to learn how to love God. Yet it is so simple. It is not necessary to do great things for God. We can do little things for Him.

Do you have small, menial tasks to do? Are they sometimes unpleasant? Do them for love of God, as a personal service to Him. As you work, look to God. Talk to Him. Ask for His help. Then when you complete the task, thank God for the grace to work.

Don't tire of doing little things out of love for Him. The littleness of the work does not lessen the value of the offering, for God regards not the greatness of the work, but the love that prompts it.

You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

As You Work

Before beginning a task, say to God in childlike trust: “O God, since You are with me, and it is Your will that I now turn to these duties, I pray, help me to continue in Your presence. Be with me as I work and accept the labor of my hands.”

As you work, continue to talk with God, offering Him little acts of service and asking for His help as needed.

When you finish, examine how you did your work. If you did it well, thank Him. If not, ask His pardon and help. Never lose heart. Remember that His forgiveness is immediate and complete. Rise after every fall, and continue joyfully in His presence as if you never failed Him.

Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men. (Ephesians 6:7)

Work Gladly and Patiently

Do you know that God has given you a certain task to do? Then do it gladly, no matter what it is. Offer it as a service to Him.

Whatever your duties, no matter how much you have to do or what the pressure, don't get in a rush. Work neither slowly nor in an impetuous hurry. Give each task the time it requires.

Work calmly before the Lord, in an evenness of mind, with exactness and moderation.

In the midst of your work, offer Him a simple word of worship. You'll find that it increases the focus and effectiveness of all you do.

Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. (Matthew 6:34)

Difficult Tasks

Do you have a difficult task? Perhaps you feel physically or mentally ill-equipped to handle the duty. Or perhaps you have a natural aversion to the work.

Don't think about it ahead of time. When the time comes to do it, commit it to God: "Lord, I cannot do this unless you enable me." Remind God that it is His business and His work, and you are just His obedient servant.

Then proceed, trusting Him for the strength and ability to do it.

Don't fret about unpleasant duties or cling to pleasant ones. Do every task out of love for God, as a personal service to Him.

Evening, morning and noon I cry out . . . and he hears my voice. (Psalm 55:17)

Worship While You Work

Begin your work, continue it, and complete it by lifting your heart to God. This habit won't form quickly or automatically, so be patient with yourself. But it is so worthwhile!

Stop your thoughts and turn them to Him for a moment. Touch Him as if by stealth as He passes. Speak simple words of love, trust, and praise. "My God, I am Yours." "O God of love, I love You with all my heart." "Jesus, make me like You." Don't do it artificially, but in your own way, from the simplicity of your heart.

By praying this way, every action throughout the day can become a moment of communion with God. We can be as united with Him in ordinary activities as during prayer time.

I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. (Philippians 3:8)

Knowing God

Long to know God—not just know *about* Him, but know *Him*.

Human relationships grow from knowing and trusting. Knowing grows from spending time together and sharing experiences.

So it is with our relationship with God. Spend time turned toward Him, not just at prayer time, but throughout all the situations of life. You'll find that the more you know Him, the more you want to know Him. The more you want to know Him, the greater will be your love for Him.

As your love grows, you'll love Him equally in sorrow and in joy.

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” This is the first and greatest commandment. (Matthew 22:37-38)

A Testimony

Brother Lawrence wrote:

“O Loving-kindness, so old and still so new, I began loving You so late in life!

“Brothers and sisters, you are still young. Please, profit from my experience. How I wish I had used my younger years for God!

“Consecrate your entire life to God and His love. If only I had known Him sooner, if only someone had told me what I’m telling you now! I would not have delayed so long in loving Him.

“Believe me, count as lost each day you have not used in loving God.”

(THE PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD Devotional Book; 34)

*Put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires . . . and . . .
.put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

(Ephesians 4:22, 24)

Don't Desert God

God is always near you and with you. Don't neglect Him. You would consider it rude to leave a friend alone who came to visit you. Why leave God alone?

He never leaves us unless we desert Him first. Be careful not to turn away from Him.

How disgraceful to leave God's presence to indulge in follies! How disrespectful to leave Him while we amuse ourselves with meaningless activities that do not please Him and only harm us. How foolish!

Walk with Him always, living and dying in His presence.

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Whom have I in heaven but you? (Psalm 73:25)

Our Eternal Destiny

Some people worry a great deal about heaven and hell and their eternal destiny.

But if we have abandoned ourselves to Him, why worry? If we trust His love, why do we care what His love brings? If we want only His will, why should tomorrow concern us? The future and all eternity are in His hands.

To love only Him and to live only to please Him—these bring great freedom of Spirit. And His *Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.*

(Romans 8:16-17)

Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 3:18)

Growing in Holiness

Do you want to be holy, and wholly God's? Realize that you must give all to gain all. Systematically discard anything that does not lead to Him. Renounce everything that comes between Him and you.

Be persistent but patient. You will not become holy all at once. Yes, God can cleanse your heart all at once, and you can set your direction toward Him all at once.

But the holy walk is a walk of faith. Walking by faith in every area of life is learned gradually. His grace will guide us step-by-step in this walk, and we cannot go faster than grace.

The closer we want to walk to God, the more dependent we will be on Him.

My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me. (Psalm 63:8)

A Taste of Heaven

If you want a taste of heaven in this world, cultivate a close, humble, loving communion with God. God will be the beauty and peace of heaven. Why wait till then to enjoy Him?

Keep bringing your thoughts back to Him in dependence and praise. If we knew our constant need for His help, we wouldn't lose sight of Him for a second.

Make your heart a sanctuary where He is always worshiped. Guard your heart, your mind, and your mouth that you don't do, say, or think anything displeasing to Him.

Remember, His help is always available. He never leaves us to our own strength. We just have to ask.

O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. (Psalm 63:1)

Draw My Desires to You, Lord

Draw my desires to You, Lord.

Draw every thought to You.

Absorb my heart,

My soul, my strength,

And draw my desires to You.

Lord, draw every thought to You.

Fill all my time with You, Lord.

Fill every hour with You.

Take all I plan

And all that comes,

And fill all my time with You.

Lord, fill every hour with You.

The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid? (Psalm 27:1)

When We Trust God

When we trust God, what is there to fear? Though we cannot see the future, if He is with us, why should we be afraid?

When we trust God, He always gives us the light we need. If we only wish to love Him and please Him, He will always help us to proceed, one step of faith at a time.

When we trust God, He is honored. The greatest glory we can give Him, the most sincere praise we can offer, is to totally mistrust our own strength and commit ourselves wholly to His keeping. When we do, we acknowledge our weakness and proclaim his power and faithfulness.

By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command.

(Hebrews 11:3)

Know God by Faith

Do you want to know God? Trust Him. Live by faith.

All the sermons we hear about God, all that we read about Him, even what we feel about Him—all these are good, but they are not enough. They cannot satisfy our desire to know God.

Since God is infinite in perfection, how can He be portrayed? How can He be expressed or described? Faith alone reveals Him and lets us know Him as He is.

Schooling is good. Study is important. But they cannot teach what we can know only by faith—by walking with Him, living in His presence, and looking to Him in every situation.

We live by faith, not by sight. (2 Corinthians 5:7)

Walk by Faith

Do you long for a quiet, rock-solid stability in your life? Walk by faith, not by sight.

When problems come, keep your eyes on God. Don't be distracted by worries and difficulties.

When spiritual dryness comes, continue to walk by faith. Live out your faith, even when you don't feel it.

When your knowledge and ability to reason hit their limits, continue to trust God. Keep your mind set on Him who is himself the Light and the fountain of all truth.

Let simple trust lead the way when knowledge and emotion cannot.

He persevered because he saw him who is invisible. (Hebrews 11:27)

Seeing the Unseen

Take faith as the light for your path. All that we hear and read is lifeless compared to the glory of knowing God personally by faith. We spend too much time pondering a copy when we should be gazing on the Original.

Fixing our eyes on God leads to a fearlessness and a firmness of mind. Seeing God lifts us above the fear and hope of all that is not Him. God is sovereign in justice and infinite in mercy. He only sends what is good for us. What should we fear? What should we hope for but Him?

Our part is to focus on Almighty God and walk in His presence, as seeing Him who is unseen.

Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek Him.

(Hebrews 11:6)

Worship by Faith

Every act of worship is the fruit of faith. To worship, we must believe that:

God exists, and as we respond to Him, He will respond to us;

He calls us to worship Him in spirit and in truth;

He is self-existent, while we depend entirely on Him;

His authority is so absolute and His perfections so infinite that we must
put all we are under His control now and forever; that we justly
owe Him every thought, word, and deed.

To worship is to believe these truths and to live accordingly.

You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you. (Isaiah 26:3)

Simple Faith

In this world of darkness and uncertainty, focus on the sure and certain path of faith. The light shed by simple faith will warn you of the rocks on which so many have shipwrecked. They let themselves drift along the current of curiosity and imagination, trusting only human guidance and hungering for whatever is new. Seek God alone, and these perils are easily avoided.

See God's hand in all the events of life. Set aside your will, misguided by ignorance and selfishness, and love His will instead. You'll find that such simple faith brings a clarity and beauty to life that lasts through every storm.

We fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. (2 Corinthians 4:18)

What Is Real?

By faith I see that God is truth. He is my final end and perfect happiness. He is perfection itself.

He is the goal of all my thoughts and the object of all my deepest affections. By comparison, the world around me seems no longer real—just fantasies and dreams, quickly fading away. By faith I see God and taste union with Him, and that is what I long for.

On the one hand, I am dazzled by the brightness of the Sun of Righteousness. On the other, my eyes are saddened by my own weakness and inconsistency. Yet I find joy in living in His presence as His humble, unworthy servant.

*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil,
for you are with me. (Psalm 23:4)*

Don't Fear Sufferings

Don't fear sufferings. Don't fear anything but God. He is present with You. Direct your concerns to Him.

Whatever He allows to come, He will give you the strength to bear it. When His strength comes, receive it as a sign of His tender care for you. Thank Him and take comfort in Him.

You are in God's hands. Trust His good purposes for you, and don't fear anything that people or circumstances can bring.

Resolve to live and die with God. Sufferings can be sweet when you are with Him, and the greatest pleasures are a cruel affliction without Him.

My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. (2 Corinthians 12:9)

Pray for Patience

When we face suffering, we usually focus all our prayers on deliverance.

Pray for patience. Ask God for the strength to bear your afflictions until He chooses to remove them. Trust Him to deliver you in His way and His time.

Realize that God is often nearer to us in sickness and suffering. He understands affliction. He is the Father of the afflicted and the Man of Sorrows. Take courage in His presence. Be content with the state of life He has allotted You. Remember, He loves you more than you can possibly imagine.

However unpleasant your burdens, take them up with love. Love eases pain.

Accept your difficulties for love of Him.

Your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. (Psalm 23:4b-5)

Worship God in Suffering

Nothing gives us so much relief in suffering as loving fellowship with God. God seems to allow suffering to come in order to draw us closer to Him.

Turn to Him. Cultivate close and loving fellowship with Him. Continue to make your heart a sanctuary where He is always worshiped. Adore Him in your infirmities.

Offer Him your sufferings as a willing sacrifice and as glad obedience to His loving will. Accept your situation as an act of submission. Remain with Him, living and dying in His presence.

Do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves. (Hebrews 12:5-6)

Our Father's Discipline

Remember what kind of creatures we were when we began our spiritual lives: selfish, impatient, fearful, unreliable, proud, and prone to choose our own way.

Is it surprising, then, that our loving and all-wise Father would humble us by struggles, teach us by temptations, prod us through pain, and continually draw us to himself through various needs?

God knows what we need, and all that He does is for our good. If we realized how much He loves us, we would gratefully receive from Him both the bitter and the sweet. He turns the hardest and most disagreeable trials to blessings. Trust Him and humbly submit to Him no matter what comes.

Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints. (Psalm 116:15)

A Living Example

When Brother Lawrence was told that his superiors had decided against a matter of great importance to him, he replied, “We must believe that they have good reason for their decision. Our duty now is to obey and say no more about it.” He never spoke of it again.

Prepared by such a life, he faced death without anxiety. Even when wracked with pain, joy filled his face and his words. His visitors were so surprised that they asked if he was suffering. His reply, “Yes, I do suffer, but my spirit is happy and contented.” They asked how his mind was busied. “I am doing what I will do through all eternity—blessing God, praising Him, adoring Him, and giving Him the love of my whole heart.”

Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life. (Proverbs 4:23)

Guard Your Heart

Do you truly desire to remain one with God? Do you long to give yourself entirely to Him and always live as He wishes?

Guard your heart. Its desires will determine your actions.

Guard your thoughts. All our problems with sin begin there. Reject immediately any thoughts that are not necessary or constructive or conducive to your communion with God.

Be always with God, and never do, say, or think anything that would displease Him. Do this out of love for Him. Turn to Him often in praise, petition, and submission. You will then receive His help in all times and places, as you need it.

God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

When Temptation Comes

If you remain in close contact with God, you are more likely to sense when temptation is intruding.

When it comes, go immediately to God. Don't toy with the desire. *Resist the devil, and he will flee from you (James 4:7)*. Remain in God's presence in complete trust, humbly worshiping Him. Tell Him your weaknesses and struggles, and lovingly ask for His help.

The world, the flesh, and the Devil wage so fierce and constant a war that unless we depend on God, we will be dragged down. But in Him we always find the help we need.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

When We Fail

What should you do when you find you have forgotten God for a while? Don't beat yourself up. Simply turn to Him again, admit your failure, and continue joyfully walking with Him. Your sadness is a sign of your love and desire for Him.

What should you do when you realize you've sinned? Don't be discouraged. Admit it. "That is just like me! I cannot do anything right without God." Confess your sin and confidently petition His grace, focusing not on your sin, but on His merits.

Then return to your normal work, and never let your mind go back. Put yourself completely in God's hands for life and death, for time and eternity.

I will heal their waywardness and love them freely. (Hosea 14:4)

Forgiving Love

“This is how I think of myself before God. I consider myself the most wretched of men, full of corruption, one who has committed all sorts of crimes against his King. Sorrowful, I confess my wickedness to Him. I ask His forgiveness and abandon myself in His hands that He may do with me what He pleases.

“But this King, full of mercy and goodness, very far from punishing me, embraces me with love. He makes me eat at His table, serves me with His own hands, and gives me the key to all His treasures. He talks with me and delights himself with me in a thousand ways. He treats me in every way like His favorite child. I am forgiven, and my sins are taken away without talking about them.”

You have been my hope, O Sovereign LORD . . . I will always have hope; I will praise you more and more (Psalm 71:5, 14)

Hope Grows

As life becomes more difficult, our hope grows. It gets stronger in adversity.

As we spend more of life turned toward God, our hope grows. As we know Him better, as we trust Him more and more, faith begins to penetrate the mysteries of God. We find in Him a beauty that infinitely surpasses not only everything on earth, but the glory of all the angels and perfected souls in heaven.

In the light of His overwhelming beauty, our hope increases and strengthens. It is nurtured by the greatness of the good it longs to enjoy. In fact, as we hope in God, we begin to taste the goodness of the One we so deeply desire.

We know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure. (1 John 3:2-3)

The Flame of Hope

The beauty of Christ and our hope in Him causes the world to fade away. What are the world and all its short-lived attractions in comparison to an eternity of oneness with Christ and rich life in Him?

Such a hope inflames us with the love of God. His love is a consuming fire that burns to ashes everything that is contrary to it. Once our souls are lit by this flame, how can we but long to live constantly, forever in His presence?

His burning love kindles within us a holy hunger, a sanctified eagerness, and an unquenchable passion to see God loved, known, served, and worshiped by all His creatures.

I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. (Psalm 146:2)

Continual Worship

What is more pleasant than to praise our great God? What is more important than to continually occupy ourselves with worshiping and loving Him for His infinite goodness and perfection?

What higher ambition can we choose than this: to become true worshipers of Him in this world, as we hope to be perfect worshipers in the world to come?

What can be more pleasing to God than for us to turn often from this world and withdraw our hearts to Him alone? These moments purge us from the things of sense among which self-love can flourish. We show Him our love when we put aside created things for a moment to rejoice in our Creator.

God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth. (John 4:24)

Worship God in Spirit

To worship God in spirit and in truth means to give Him the worship that is His due.

God is a spirit. Therefore He must be worshiped in spirit, by a humble and genuine worship in the depths of our souls, where He alone can see it.

As we worship Him more and more often, this worship becomes a natural response to His continual presence with us. God becomes one with our souls and our souls one with Him. What began as our sporadic response of love gradually blends into a unison of love with Him. We begin to taste the beautiful, unbroken union Christ enjoys with the Father.

God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth. (John 4:24)

Worship God in Truth

To worship God in truth is to acknowledge Him to be what He is, and ourselves to be what we are.

To worship Him in truth is to recognize from the depths of our soul that He is indeed infinitely perfect, worthy of infinite adoration, infinitely removed from sin, and immeasurably full of every divine quality. Isn't the person unreasonable who does not use all his powers to give this God the worship He is due?

To worship God in truth is to confess that we fall far short of this reasonable response to Him. If we were only willing, He would make us like himself. Aren't we foolish to withhold, even for a moment, the love, service, and ceaseless worship that we owe Him?

Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. (Deuteronomy 6:5)

Love Him

Always be ruled by love for God. Make it the focus of all your actions. If you do, you need not fear your eternal destiny.

Neither should you worry about doing great things for God. Small things will do, for He looks upon the love, not the size of the deed. Be happy if you can pick up a straw from the ground for the love of God.

Devotional practices are only useful as they promote this loving union with God. The shortest, surest way to come to God is to do everything out of love for Him. Knowledge and understanding are of little importance compared to this. Our business is to simply love God and be happy in Him.

I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge. (Ephesians 3:17-19)

A Prayer of Love

O Lord, the sense of Your love nearly overwhelms me. If it be Your will, give Your many gifts of love to those who don't know You, to draw them to yourself.

For me, it is enough to have the riches that faith brings—the riches of knowing You. But since You also give me Your many gifts of love, and since I cannot reject them, accept my praises, Lord.

As I give these gifts back to You, accept them as well. For You know that it is not Your gifts that I seek, but You yourself. My heart will have no rest till it has found You.

I eagerly expect . . . that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. (Philippians 1:20)

Not I, but Christ

Not I, but Christ

Be honored and exalted.

Not I, but Christ

Be worshiped and adored.

May all I am reflect His holy beauty.

Not I, but Christ be seen and heard.

Christ, only Christ,

My joy and deepest longing!

Christ, only Christ,

My goal and my reward!

Soon He will shine

In love and light and glory—

Christ, only Christ forevermore!

by Ken Bible & Mrs. A. A. Whiddington

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