

## SHEPHERDS DAY AWAY

### Practicing God's Presence

Brother Lawrence  
*The Practice of the Presence of God*

9:00	intro to the day Hilary, Judie, Vanessa, Joel reflection / worship all
9:45	<b><i>Practicing God's Presence:</i></b> <b><i>Portable Oratory, Availability, Tranquility</i></b> - Joel
10:10	personal time
11:10	<b><i>Practicing God's Presence:</i></b> <b><i>Vision, Intention, Means</i></b> - Judie
11:30	personal time
12:20	gathering up the morning
12:50	worship - Hilary Benediction
1:00	close



## Little Things with Great Love

The Porter's Gate

In the garden of our Savior no flower grows unseen  
His kindness reigns like water on every humble seed  
No simple act of mercy escapes His watchful eye  
For there is One who loves me, His hand is over mine

In the kingdom of the heavens  
No suff'ring is unknown  
Each tear that falls is holy  
Each breaking heart a throne  
There is a song of beauty on ev'ry weeping eye  
For there is One who loves me  
His heart it breaks with mine

Oh the deeds forgotten, oh the works unseen  
Every drink of water flowing graciously  
Ev'ry tender mercy You're making glorious  
This You have asked us  
Do little things with great love  
Little things with great love

At the table of our Savior no mouth will go unfed  
His children in the shadows  
Stream in and raise their heads  
Oh give us ears to hear them  
And give us eyes to see  
For there is One who loves them  
I am His hands and feet



# The Practice of God's Presence

Portable Oratory / Availability / Tranquility

## Psalm 84

How lovely is your dwelling place,  
O LORD of hosts!

<sup>2</sup> My soul longs, yes, faints  
for the courts of the LORD;  
my heart and flesh sing for joy  
to the living God.

<sup>3</sup> Even the sparrow finds a home,  
and the swallow a nest for herself,  
where she may lay her young,  
at your altars, O LORD of hosts,  
my King and my God...

<sup>10</sup> For a day in your courts is better  
than a thousand elsewhere.  
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God  
than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

## the time of business

*"The time of business does not with me differ from the time of prayer; and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquility as if I were upon my knees at the blessed sacrament."* Fourth Conversation

## bosom of God

*"I have a friend who these forty years past has been practicing a realization of the Presence of God. To it he gives many other names; sometimes he calls it a loving gaze, an inward sense of God; yet again he terms it a waiting on God, a silent converse with him, the life and peace of the soul..."*

Monsieur Beaufort, Vicar to M. de Chalons, Spiritual Maxims

*If I dare use the expression, I should choose to call this state the bosom of God..."*

Brother Lawrence, Second Letter



## Portable Oratory

### oratory

*It is not necessary for being with God to be always at church; we may make an oratory of our heart wherein to retreat from time to time to converse with Him...* Letter Seven

*[God] requires no great matters of us; a little remembrance of Him from time to time; a little adoration; sometimes to pray for His grace, sometimes to offer Him your sufferings, and sometimes to return Him thanks for the favors He has given you, and still gives you in the midst of your troubles, and to console yourself with Him the oftenest you can. Lift up your heart to Him; the least little remembrance will always be acceptable to Him. You need not cry very loud; He is nearer to us than we are aware.*  
Letter Seven

### temple

*"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?"* 1 Cor 6:19

*"...all things were created through him and for him... and in him all things hold together.*  
*Colossians 1:16,17*

*"...he upholds the universe by the word of his power."* Hebrews 1:3

*"In him we live and move and have our being."* Acts 17:28

### com-templum

"contemplate" is from the Latin "com-templum" meaning "with a temple"

### the Original

*God alone can reveal Himself to us; we toil and exercise our mind in reason and in science, forgetting that therein we see only a copy, whilst we neglect to gaze on the Original. In the depths of our soul God reveals Himself, could we but realize it, yet we will not look there for Him. We leave Him to spend our time in fooleries, and disdain to commune with Him who is ever-present...*  
The Character of Brother Lawrence

**separated from myself**

“contra-templum” – against my temple

“oblivio-templum” – in forgetfulness

“ignorans-templum” – in unknowing

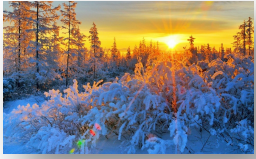
**come home!**

*“God is at home, it is we who have gone for a walk.”* Meister Eckhart

**within**

*If in this life we would enjoy the peace of paradise, we must accustom ourselves to a familiar, humble, and affectionate conversation with Him... We must make our heart a spiritual temple.* Letter Fourteen

*He is within us; seek Him not elsewhere.* Letter Fifteen



## Availability

### available

*The heart must be empty of all other things; because God will possess the heart alone; and He cannot possess it alone without emptying it of all besides, so neither can He act there, and do in it what He please, unless it be left vacant to Him.* Letter Five

### Jesus and self-emptying

*"[Jesus] emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men..."*  
Philippians 2:7

**Kenosis** – self-emptying, a choice to empty

### birth

Emptying precedes birth, new life

### resolved

*Having found in many books different methods of going to God, and divers practices of the spiritual life, I thought this would serve rather to puzzle me than facilitate what I sought after, which was nothing but how to become wholly God's. This made me resolve to give the all for the all... I renounced for the love of Him everything that was not he; and I began to live as if there was none but He and I in the world.* Letter One



## Tranquility

### **tranquility**

*If [your mind] sometimes wanders and withdraws itself from Him, do not much disquiet yourself for that; trouble and disquiet serve rather to distract the mind than to recollect it; the will must bring the mind back in tranquility. If you persevere in this manner, God will have pity on you. Letter Eight*

*Console yourself with Him the oftenest you can. Letter Seven*

### **abandon**

*I abandon myself in His hands that He may do what He pleases with me. The King, full of mercy and goodness, very far from chastising me, embraces me with love, makes me eat at His table, serves me with His own hands, gives me the key of His treasures; He converses and delights Himself with me incessantly in a thousand and a thousand ways, and treats me in all respects as His favorite. It is thus I consider myself in His holy presence. My most useful method is this - simple attention... If I dare use the expression, I should choose to call this state the bosom of God for the inexpressible sweetness which I taste and experience there. Letter Two*

***the mind wants answers, the heart wants rest***

### **trouble not**

I am in the hands of God, and He has his own good purposes regarding me; therefore I trouble not myself for aught that man can do to me. If I cannot serve God here, elsewhere I shall find a place wherein to serve Him. Gathered Thoughts



## - PERSONAL TIME -

### *The Practice of God's Presence*

### ***Portable Oratory, Availability, Tranquility***

*In response to the questions & activities on the following pages, journal your thoughts, draw a picture, create a poem, an artistic symbol, or any other response.*

#### **Ponder the Scriptures and the Brother Lawrence quotes on the preceding pages**

Notice: Do any quote(s) especially stir something in me? Is this touching a conversation my soul wants to have with God? What would I like to say to God about this? What is God's word in return?





## Portable Oratory

*God alone can reveal Himself to us; we toil and exercise our mind in reason and in science, forgetting that therein we see only a copy, whilst we neglect to gaze on the Original. In the depths of our soul God reveals Himself, could we but realize it, yet we will not look there for Him. We leave Him to spend our time in fooleries, and disdain to commune with Him who is ever-present...* The Character of Brother Lawrence

*Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?* 1 Corinthians 6:19

### **My temple**

"contemplate" is from the Latin "com-templum" meaning "with a temple"

What is my relationship with myself?

*As I reflect on myself as God's home are any yearnings stirred? If I stay with those yearnings, if I listen to them and give them space, what do they signal? What's their invitation?*

*Spend a few minutes listening to God's invitation to come home to your temple.*

*After a few minutes, ask: What would I like to say to God about this? What is God's word in return?*

### **Notice what works**

*What kinds of thoughts or inner postures have I noticed in the past that typically grow a sense of God's presence in and with me? Which thoughts or postures tend to separate me from an awareness of God?*

### **Identify an ordinary daily activity in which you'd like a growing sense of God's presence**

*Use this activity as a "beachhead" for growing a deepening awareness of God and your true self. Ask: What simple habits of awareness can I practice in this activity to help grow a sense of God's presence in and with me while I'm doing it?*



## Availability

*The heart must be empty of all other things; because God will possess the heart alone; and He cannot possess it alone without emptying it of all besides, so neither can He act there, and do in it what He please, unless it be left vacant to Him. Letter Five*

### **What's my response to the quote above?**

*What seems attractive and life giving here? What feels threatening? Is there any area of my life right now where exploring this more might make space for my real life to come forward?*

### **Kenosis**

*"[Jesus] emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men..." Phil 2:7*

*Jesus emptied himself of the way he'd always lived and the way he'd always done things in the past. This prepared him to be born. Is there something in me preparing to be born? Is there any form of Kenosis—entrusting my preferences into Jesus' care—that's required for this newness to come to birth?*

*What would I like to say to God about this? What is God's word in return?*



## Tranquility

*If [your mind] sometimes wanders and withdraws itself from him, do not much disquiet yourself for that; trouble and disquiet serve rather to distract the mind than to recollect it; the will must bring the mind back in tranquility. If you persevere in this manner, God will have pity on you.* Letter Eight

***“Console yourself with Him the oftenest you can.”*** Letter Seven

*Does my heart yearn to console itself in God today? Do I feel ready to relax into Jesus’ consolation? What must I release to let my heart drink of Jesus in this way? What must I hold onto? Write a prayer below giving God permission to console your deepest self.*

***The mind wants answers, the heart wants rest***

*As I reflect on the Brother Lawrence quote below, what feels nourishing, anchoring, completing? Be with God in whatever stirs.*

*I abandon myself in His hands that He may do what He pleases with me. The King, full of mercy and goodness, very far from chastising me, embraces me with love, makes me eat at his table, serves me with His own hands, gives me the key of His treasures; He converses and delights Himself with me incessantly in a thousand and a thousand ways, and treats me in all respects as His favorite. It is thus I consider myself in His holy presence. My most useful method is this – simple attention... If I dare use the expression, I should choose to call this state the bosom of God for the inexpressible sweetness which I taste and experience there.* Letter Two

## Unveiling

*There is an “unveiling” effect connected with practicing God’s presence in one’s life. Old assumptions, motivations, interior prisons, new possibilities and much more gradually are unveiled for what they are. Notice: Is there any unveiling that I’ve been sensing lately? What clearer vision about my life and future is at the edge of my awareness? What’s my response?*



## Practicing God's Presence

# Attending God in Quiet

### a way of wordless prayer

- find your habitual spot for prayer
- enjoy a psalm or other Scripture to ready your heart
- set a timer for 5 or 10 minutes (increase the time as you desire)
- place yourself in a position of relaxed attention
- let your deepest self welcome God, relax with God, consent to God's presence
  - release a need to feel God; just lovingly be with God
- keep things light, loose, have no expectations or demands, remain
- when finished be grateful for the time however it went; *know you attended God!*

### wandering thoughts

- when the mind wanders, just return to your intention to be with God
  - If your mind wanders 1,000 times that's 1,000 opportunities to return to Jesus!
- don't fight thoughts or try to have no thoughts
  - don't hassle yourself about wandering thoughts / expect them / simply return to God
  - let thoughts be in your head – let attentiveness to God be in your heart
- When attention drifts, say a word that signifies your intention to be with God
  - "Jesus," "abide," "welcome," (or any word that renews your intention to be with God)
- to further anchor your intention to be with God, maybe bring an image to mind
  - e.g. Mary at Jesus' feet in Luke 10, John on Jesus' breast in John 13, the children on Jesus' lap in Mark 10 - or any image that helps renew your intention to rest, remain, abide with God

### Community Use

Practice this kind of prayer in small groups, marriages, families, friendships and ministry teams. Waiting wordlessly together with God fosters joy, respectful listening, forgiveness and new possibilities in life and service. This prayer method deeply strengthens bonds of shared life in Christ in your group.



# The Practice of God's Presence

Vision / Intention / Means

## Vision

***“O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands.”*** Psalm 63:1-4 ESV

***“For me to live is Christ, to die is gain.”*** Philippians 1.21

*“As Brother Lawrence found such an advantage in walking in the presence of God, it was natural for him to recommend it earnestly to others. But his example was a stronger inducement than any arguments he could ever have proposed. His very countenance was edifying, with such a sweet and calm devotion appearing in it as could not but affect its beholders.*

*“It was observed that in the greatest hurry of business in the kitchen, he still preserved his recollection and heavenly-mindedness. He was neither hasty nor loitering but did each thing in its season, with an even, uninterrupted composure and tranquility of spirit. ‘The time of business,’ said he, ‘does not differ with me from the time of prayer; and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great a tranquility as if I were upon my knees at the blessed sacrament.’”* Fourth Conversation

What times do you feel like you “possess God in great a tranquility”? Which times are especially difficult for you to recollect the presence of God?



*"Recently I went to Burgundy to buy the wine provisions for the society which I have joined. This was a very unwelcome task for me. I have no natural business ability and, being lame, I cannot get around the boat except by rolling myself over the casks. Nonetheless, this matter gave me no uneasiness, nor did the purchase of wine. I told the Lord that it was His business that I was about. Afterwards, I found the whole thing well performed." Second Conversation*

Think of a recent ministry task that was unwelcome, for which you felt no natural ability and which may have made you feel awkward. How did you approach it? How would it have been different if you considered it totally the Lord's business, "speaking to Him frankly and plainly and imploring His assistance in our affairs...?"

**And for further consideration, you might want to spend some time reflecting on visions from spiritual writers who have walked in the way of Brother Lawrence:**

*"There is a way of ordering our mental life on more than one level at once. On one level we may be thinking, discussing, seeing, calculating, meeting all the demands of external affairs. But deep within, behind the scenes, at a profounder level, we may also be in prayer and adoration, song and worship and a gentle receptiveness to divine breathings. The secular world of today values and cultivates only the first level, assured that there is where the real business of mankind is done.... But in a deeply religious culture men know that the deep level of prayer and of divine attendance is the most important thing in the world. It is at this deep level that the real business of life is determined." Thomas Kelly, A Testament of Devotion*

*"At first the practice of inward prayer is a process of alternation of attention between outer things and the Inner Light.... Yet what is sought is not alternation, but simultaneity, worship undergirding every moment, living prayer, the continuous current and background moments of life.... But the hunger of the committed one is for unbroken communion and adoration, and we may be sure He longs for us to find it and supplements our weakness. For our quest is of His initiation, and is carried forward in His tender power and completed by His grace." Thomas Kelly, A Testament of Devotion*

*"You may not win all your minutes to Christ, or even half, but you do win a richer life. There are no losers excepting those who quit. We develop what Thomas a Kempis calls a 'familiar friendship with Jesus.' Our unseen Friend becomes dearer, closer and more wonderful every day until at last we know Him as 'Jesus, lover of my soul,' not only in song but in blissful experience." Frank Laubach, The Game With Minutes*



## Intention

***“With eyes wide open to the mercies of God, I beg you, my brothers, as an act of intelligent worship, to give him your bodies, as a living sacrifice, consecrated to him and acceptable by him. Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God re-mold your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all his demands and moves towards the goal of true maturity.”*** Romans 12:1 - PHILLIPS

*“Some people have said that this state is nothing but inactivity, delusion and self-love on my part. I agree that it is a holy inactivity, and it would be a happy self-love if the soul were capable of self-love in that state. But actually the very reverse is true. When the soul is at rest in God it does not follow its usual selfish behavior; its love is only for God.*

*“I cannot bear, either, to regard this as ‘delusion.’ When my inner man is in the Lord’s presence, enjoying Him, it desires nothing except the Lord! If this is a delusion then it is up to God to remedy it. ‘Lord, do with me as you please. I desire only you, and to be wholly devoted to you.’”* Sixth Letter

How can you pray about the reality you live in, the ways the world squeezes you into its mold? (See Romans 12.1-2 above.)



*"I have always been governed by love without selfish views, and have resolved to make the love of God the end of all my actions. I have been well satisfied with this single motive. I am pleased when I can take a straw from the ground simply for the love of God, seeking Him only and nothing else — not even seeking His gifts."*

Second Conversation

Think back on the last week of ministry - how much of what you did was "governed by love without selfish views"? What do you honestly want to be your motivation in ministry? How hard is it for you to separate the love of God from his gifts? Does this seem like a difference without a distinction?

***"By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me."*** Jesus speaking in John 5:30

*"In other words, I carry out my actions with the desire to please the Lord and then let all else come as it will."* Second Conversation

Many of us do not feel free or able to please only the Lord. Who else do you find yourself trying to please? What would it mean to place those efforts under the umbrella of "pleasing the Lord"?





## The Means

***“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart,  
as working for the Lord, not for men...”*** Colossians 3.23

### DO LITTLE THINGS WITH GREAT LOVE

***“And 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 3.14

*“...in every condition I please myself by doing little things for the love of God.”*  
Second Conversation

*“Our sanctification does not depend upon changing our works, but in doing for God’s  
sake all those things which we commonly do for our own.... The most excellent method  
I have found of going to God is that of doing common business without any view to  
pleasing men, and as far as I am capable, doing it purely for the love of God.*

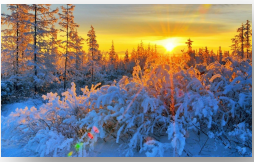
*“We ought not to be weary in doing little things for the love of God. For God does not  
regard the greatness of the work but the love with which it is performed.”*  
Fourth Conversation

Try doing something “small” entirely for the love of God - empty the dishwasher, vacuum a room, get gas in the car - how does it feel to do that “purely for the love of God”?

### Friends of Brother Lawrence on the topic:

*“Miss no single opportunity of making some small sacrifice, here by a smiling look,  
there by a kindly word; always doing the smallest right and doing it all for love.”*  
Therese of Lisieux

*“Not all of us can do great things, but we can do small things with great love.”*  
Mother Teresa of Calcutta



## TURN OUR THOUGHTS TO GOD...

***“We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ.”*** 2 Corinthians 10:5 –NLT

*“Our useless thoughts spoil everything. They are where the mischief begins. We ought to reject such thoughts as soon as we perceive their impertinence to the matter at hand. We ought to reject them and return to our communion with God.”* Second Conversation

*“Do this instead. Hold yourself before the Lord. Remain there as a poor man sitting at a rich man’s gate, waiting. Let it be your business to keep your mind in the presence of the Lord.”* Ninth Letter

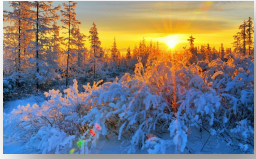
What do you think about when you’re not thinking about anything? How can you learn the habit of turning your thoughts towards God? What will help? Do you have a favorite image of abiding in God’s presence?

### From others about prayer and surrender:

*“There is a moment between intending to pray and actually praying that is as dark and silent as any moment in our lives. It is the split second between thinking about prayer and really praying. For some of us, the split second may last for decades. It seems, then, that the greatest obstacle to prayer is the simple matter of beginning, the simple exertion of the will, the starting, the acting, the doing. How easy it is, and yet -- between us and the possibility of prayer there seems to be a great gulf fixed: an abyss of our own making that separates us from God.”*  
Emilie Griffin, *Clinging: The Experience of Prayer*

*“For the past few days I have been experimenting in a more complete surrender than ever before. I am taking, by deliberate act of the will, enough time from each hour to give God much thought. Yesterday and today I have made a new adventure, which is not easy to express. I am feeling God in each movement, by an act of will - willing that he shall direct these fingers that now strike this typewriter....”* Frank Laubach, *Letters By a Modern Mystic*

*“But this year I have started out trying to live all my waking moments in conscious listening to the inner voice, asking without ceasing, ‘What, Father, do you desire said? What, Father, do you desire done this minute?’ It is clear that this is exactly what Jesus was doing all day every day. But it is not what His followers have been doing in very large numbers.”* Frank Laubach, *Letters By a Modern Mystic*



## CONFESSION

***“Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, ‘Do you love me?’ He said, ‘Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.’” John 21.17b***

*“When I fail in my duty I simply admit my faults, saying to God, ‘I shall never do otherwise if you leave me to myself. It is You who must stop my falling and it is You who must amend that which is amiss.’ After such praying I allow myself no further uneasiness about my faults. I am keenly aware of my faults, but I am not discouraged by them.” Second Conversation*

*“I have no scruples; for when I fail in my duty I readily acknowledge it saying, ‘I am used to doing so; I shall never do otherwise if I am left to myself.’ If I do not fail, then I give God thanks, acknowledging that the strength comes from Him.”  
Second Conversation*

Sit with your faults and failings in the presence of the One who loves you completely.



## **I Don't Have Much**

by Mission House

How can I respond  
To the love that You have lavished on me  
How can I respond  
To the love that You have lavished on me

I don't have much, I don't have much  
But I have a heart that beats for You  
I have a heart that beats for You

Ev'ry part of me wants to love You  
like You've loved me Lord  
Ev'ry part of me wants to love You  
like You've loved me my Lord

I have a heart that beats for You  
I have a heart that beats for You  
I have a heart that beats for You  
I have a heart that beats for You

I have a life I'll give to You  
I have a life I'll give to You  
I have a life I'll give to You  
I have a life I'll give to You