

# Finding the Spiritual in Everyday Life

As Inspired by the Teachings of Brother Lawrence



## Class Two: Distraction

### Lawrence was a Christian master of mindfulness

“Lord of all pots and pans and things ... make me a saint by getting meals and washing up plates.”

“That we ought not to be weary of doing little things for the love of God, who regards not the greatest of the work, but the love with which it is performed.” (Fourth Conversation)

At its heart, Brother Lawrence’s practice was simply Zen - a focus on the present moment in order to wake up, to be able to see the Light.” - Ellyn Sanna, [Brother Lawrence: A Christian Zen Master](#)

“Blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear.” - Matthew 13:16

### We all get distracted

“That at the beginning he had often passed his time appointed for prayer in rejecting wandering thoughts and falling back into them.” (Second Conversation)

“My thoughts are my biggest obstacle to living this [mindful] way of life. The little useless thoughts that drift through my head, making mischief, distracting me. I’ve learned to reject them as soon as I notice them. They have nothing to do with the reality at hand - nor with my eternal salvation - and once I stop paying attention to them, I can get back to communing with God.” - Brother Lawrence, paraphrased in CAC Daily Meditation, July 15, 2021.

### We are assisted by God in our work of mindfulness

“If sometimes he is a little too much absent from that divine presence, God presently makes Himself to be felt in his soul to recall him, which often happens when he is most engaged in his outward business.” (Fourth Letter)

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## Clear-seeing helps us stay focused in the moment

"We often can't change the conditions or circumstances that are immediately in front of us, but we can change our relationship to our experience of them, and that can change everything.

We can recognize - OK, this is the way things are right now, and I can see them; I don't have to be afraid of what I am facing; I can see things for what they are - and then I can move forward in a different way." - Sharon Salzberg, interview with Krista Tippett on OnBeing

## Why is clear-seeing important to our spiritual life?

"We practice in order to cultivate a sense of agency, to understand that a range of responses is open to us. We practice to remember to breathe, to have the space in the midst of adversity to remember our value, what we really care about, and to find support in our inner strength and in one another." - Sharon Salzberg, interview with Krista Tippett on OnBeing

## How do we practice distraction?

"That when sometimes he had not thought of God for a good while, he did not disquiet himself for it; but, after having acknowledged his wretchedness to God, he returned to Him with so much greater trust in Him as he had found in himself wretched through forgetting Him." - Third Conversation

## Practicing distraction must come from a place of loving-kindness

"I do not say that therefore we must put any violent constraint upon ourselves. No, we must serve God in holy freedom; we must do our business faithfully, without trouble or disquiet, recalling our mind to God mildly, and with tranquility, as often as we find it wandering from Him." - Sixth Letter

"I besought His pardon, and without losing heart I set my spirit right, and returned unto His presence, as though I had never wandered from Him. Thus, after every fall, and by doing all in faith and love, without wearying, I have come to a state in which it would be

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as little possible for me not to think of God, as it was hard to discipline myself thereto at the beginning. - Gathered Thoughts

## What constitutes prayer?

"Prayer is not thinking much but loving much." - Brother Lawrence, Practice of the Presence of God

"God is everywhere, in all places, and there is no spot where we cannot draw near to Him, and hear Him speaking in our heart; with a little love, just a very little, we shall not find it hard." - The Character of Brother Lawrence

"God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him." - John 4:16

"We search for stated ways and methods of learning how to love God, and to come at that love we disquiet our minds by I know not how many devices; we give ourselves a world of trouble and pursue a multitude of practices to attain to a sense of the presence of God. And yet it is so simple. How very much shorter it is and easier *to do our common business purely for the love of God*, to set His consecrating mark on all we lay hands to, and thereby to foster the sense of His abiding Presence by communion of our *heart* with his!

That God always gave us light in our doubts when we had no other design but to please Him." - Fourth Conversation