

Finding the Spiritual in Everyday Life

As Inspired by the Teachings of Brother Lawrence



Class 1: Rebellion

“Should”

“It is, however, necessary to put our whole trust in God, laying aside all other cares, and even some particular forms of devotion, though very good in themselves, yet as one often engages in unreasonably, because these devotions are only means to attain an end.

So when by this exercise of the presence of God we are with Him who is our end, it is then useless to return to the means.”

- Brother Lawrence’s Sixth Letter

Many Christians do not grow because “they stick in penances and particular exercises, while they neglect the love of God, which is the end.”

The nature of a lasting practice

Do it because it makes everything in your life better.

“I am confident, it is a common error among religious persons, to neglect this practice of ceasing for a time that which they are engaged upon to worship God in the depth of their soul, and to enjoy the peace of brief communion with Him.”

- Brother Lawrence’s Fourth Spiritual Maxim

The whole point is that we show up!

“Content with what is chance obtained, transcending the opposites, without envy, the same in success and failure, though performing actions - he is not bound.”

- Bhagavad Gita

Trivial Devotions

“We ought not to be weary of doing little things for the love of God, who regards not the greatness of the work, but the love with which it is performed.”

- Brother Lawrence

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What does communing with God all day look like?

“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door, and pray to your Father who is unseen. The your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think they will be heard because of their many words ... for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.”

- Matthew 6:5-8

God doesn't get distracted, we do.

“That with him the set times of prayer were not different from other times; that he retired to pray, according to the directions of his superior, but that he did not want such retirement, nor ask for it, because his greatest business did not divert him from God.”

- Brother Lawrence, Second Conversation

“That we might accustom ourselves to continual conversation with Him, with freedom and in simplicity. That we need only to recognize God intimately present with us, to address ourselves to Him every moment, that we may beg His assistance for knowing His will in things doubtful, and for rightly performing those we plainly see He requires of us, offering them to Him before we do them, and giving Him thanks when we have done.”

- Brother Lawrence, Fourth Conversation

What to do when we must live with a “should?”

“We must believe they [our superiors] have good reasons for their decision, and our duty now is to obey, and to say no more about it.”

- The Character of Brother Lawrence

“As for my set hours of prayer, they are only a continuation of the same exercise. Sometimes I consider myself there as a stone carver, whereof he is to make a statue;

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presenting myself thus before God, I desire Him to form His perfect image in my soul, and make me entirely like Himself.”

- Brother Lawrence, Second Letter

How do we handle failure?

“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.”

- Brother Lawrence, Sixth Letter

Carrot vs. Stick

“Why do we content ourselves with so little?

God has infinite treasure to bestow; and we take up with a little sensible devotion, which passes in a moment. Blind as we are, we hinder God and stop the current of His graces. But where He finds a soul penetrated with a lively faith, He pours into it His graces and favors plentifully; there they flow like a torrent which, after being forcibly stopped against its ordinary course, when it has found a passage, spreads itself with impetuosity and abundance.

Yet, we often stop this torrent by the little value we set upon it. But let us stop it no more; let us enter into ourselves and break down the bank which hinders it. Let us make way for grace; let us redeem the lost time, for perhaps we have but little left.”

- Brother Lawrence, Fourth Letter

God does not focus on our wandering, but celebrates our return.

Where are we re-turning?

“To span the infinite gap between the divine and the human, God’s agenda is to plant a little bit of God, the Holy Spirit, right inside of us. (John 14:16-17, Romans 8:9, 11, 1 Corinthians 3:16)”

- Richard Rohr, Daily Meditation, August 8, 2021

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"We are journeying ever deeper into the Divine Indwelling, where the inner room of our prayer expands to include the everyday activities of our life.

...

There is no question of worthiness. No test. No special qualifications. Simply, come. ..."

- Contemplative Outreach, Word of the Week, August 8, 2021