

## *Practicing the Presence of God: Experiencing God in the Common Things of Life*



The invitation by Jesus to “abide” or keep company with him (John 15: Matt. 11), is not so much about strategy as it is being attentive to his continual, available presence. In other words, Bible reading and prayer are not the only two activities that count spiritually. When we only view spiritual practices as prayer and Bible study we divorce ourselves from the many encounters with God that occur throughout the day.

Practicing the presence of God is a way of living into a deeper awareness of God’s activity in our lives and staying connected throughout our day. Through many small pauses we begin a habit of turning our heart toward God. In a very real sense this is how these verses on prayer come to make sense:

1 Thess. 5:17 – “Pray without ceasing.”

Romans 12:12 – Be constant in prayer.”

Eph. 6:18 – “Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.”

What we begin to discover in all this is God is everywhere present to us. Thus, to be in prayer constantly is to recognize his presence in every moment.

When the crucifixion of Jesus is dramatized in the Gospels, we have this very interesting image of the tearing of the temple veil from top to bottom. Now the word for temple is *fanum*. Everything outside the temple was *pro fanum*. (Hence we get our word “profane.”) There was “the holy” and it was distinguished from “the unholy.” The tearing of the temple veil from top to bottom is saying that division of life is over. *Everything* is now potentially the *fanum*, the holy, the temple. All lines between secular and holy vanish and we realize that life itself is holy.

Author Craig Barnes put it this way: “It could be that the yearning to have something miraculous happen is symptomatic of how hard a time we have in finding God in the common moments of life....Rather than waiting for God to do big things in your life, think about how God is finding you through the marvelously mundane moments of everyday life. For if the momentary is not sacred to you, then neither will be the momentous. Yet if the common moments of life are sacred opportunities for encountering God, then all of life will become rather spectacular.” (*Extravagant Mercy*, M. Craig Barnes, p.62)

Rather than waiting for God to do big things in your life, think about how God is finding you through the marvelously mundane moments of every life. When we begin to see God in the ins and outs of our lives we begin to truly live it unto God *Then* our lives

become a ceaseless prayer. *So then prayer is seen as not so much an activity for God but more as an increased awareness of God.*

C.S. Lewis, in writing on prayer recommended wakefulness as the way to penetrate God's disguises: "We may ignore, but we can nowhere evade, the Presence of God. The world is crowded with Him. He walks everywhere incognito. And the incognito is not always hard to penetrate. The real labor is to remember, to attend. In fact, to come awake. Still more to remain awake."

Practicing the presence of God has a lot to do with attentiveness and being awake to God in the present moment. Author, Ruth Haley Barton said it well. "Abiding is not primarily about cloister and quiet. Rather it is showing up all the way with God in this present moment. That is the wonder of the Christian life: that every moment is pregnant with the possibility of abiding deeply in Christ and being surprised by a kind of fruitfulness that is beyond anything we could have accomplished for ourselves."<sup>i</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Ruth Haley Barton, <http://www.navpress.com/Magazines/DJ/PrinterFriendlyArticle.asp?ID=128.07>, Article in Discipleship Journal, Issue 128, March/April 2002, accessed 10/25/06

### **Suggested Resources:**

*The Practice of the Presence of God* by Brother Lawrence

*The God Hunt* by Karen Mains

*Invitation to Presence* by Wendy Miller