

# Practicing the Presence of God

## Bill Loveless

In March of 1995 I first met David Love. This meeting was the first time that I became aware of meeting someone living a Christ-centered life. As I look back I realize that it was not the first time that I had been in the presence of a Christ-centered believer. However, it was the first time that I was “aware” of it. Shortly after that visit, David gave me a copy of a book by Brother Lawrence called *The Practice of the Presence of God*. I will never forget the first time that I read that book. As I read through the pages, I realized that this man, a simple cook in a monastery in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, had a relationship with God for which my spirit longed. As he described his intimacy with God, his longing to never leave His presence, and his oneness with God, the Spirit of God confirmed in my spirit that this was where He was taking me. However, even though I knew in my spirit that this is where God wanted me to be in my relationship with Him, it wasn't until recently that I began having a deeper spiritual experience of His presence.

Isn't that true of our Christian life? When God gives us revelation, it seems that we must walk in that revelation by faith before it becomes part of our experience. Such was the case in 1995 when God began revealing to me that the Christian life was more about intimacy and relationship than about legalism and performance. When you first look at the book's title through a non-Christ focused lens, the word “practicing” sounds like man's effort to apprehend God. However, Brother Lawrence defines the word “practicing” as a seeking after God by faith until it becomes real in your experience. Interestingly enough we know, because of our union with Christ, that we are always in His presence. However, being in His presence is not the same thing as being aware of His presence. I believe that this is what God is desiring for each one of us. It is not the knowing of God that brings deeper intimacy. It is the moment by moment awareness of Him.

I want to share with you a few thoughts by A.W. Tozer from his book, “*The Pursuit of God*.” He asks these questions: “Why do some persons “find” God in a way that others do not? Why does God manifest His presence to some and let multitudes of others struggle along in the half-light of imperfect Christian experience?” He goes on to say that God doesn't choose favorites. He wants to manifest His presence to every believer. He recounts Biblical saints who had this ongoing awareness of God's presence. The common denominator in all of them was that they all possessed a spiritual receptivity and a desire and willingness to seek Him and respond to His inner voice. David expressed this in Psalms 27:8 when he said, “***When Thou didst say, “Seek My face,” my heart said to Thee, “Thy face, O LORD, I shall seek.”***” David had a spiritual receptivity that led to such a spiritual awareness that he was labeled by God as “A man after My own heart”.

Think of it for a moment. Don't you have a heart to know God's will, His purpose, and His plan for your life? How will you ever know that these things are from God? It only comes as we cultivate an attitude of spiritual receptivity or, as Brother Lawrence says, “practicing” His presence”. We know from Philippians 1:6 and 2:13 that God is always pressing in on us and is drawing us into intimacy with Himself. His desire is that we be spiritual listeners and responders. The visual image that comes to mind is like a person sitting in the back of a large room leaning forward and straining to hear the voice of the speaker whose microphone no longer works. God sometimes whispers so that we, too, will lean forward in order to hear His voice.

He has placed a desire and a willingness within each one of us to be aware of His presence in us. However, we must act on that desire in order to cultivate that relationship. I see this played out in the “seen” realm in my marriage relationship with Paige. God placed within me (16 years ago on Oct. 22) a desire and a willingness to enter into a marriage relationship. What if after saying “I do,” I didn’t act on those desires? There would be no relationship. Such is the case with Christ. As our spiritual husband, Jesus’s desire is for us to seek Him, desire Him, and to love Him. He is constantly “wooing” us to Himself. Therefore, Paige and I pray for each one of you that you continue to allow Christ in you to draw you into intimacy with Himself and to make you increasingly “aware” of His presence in your life. As you do this, the awareness of His presence will grow. What is the result? Brother Lawrence describes it this way: “As I abandon myself into His hands, the King, full of mercy and goodness, embraces me with love, makes me eat at His table, serves me with His own hands, and gives me the key to His treasures.” Amen!

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