

## A PRACTICAL PRIMER ON PRAYER

by

Dorothy C. Haskin

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The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago

### CHAPTER TEN -

### THE SECRET OF HIS PRESENCE

**"Pray without ceasing"** (I Thessalonians 5:17).

BROTHER LAWRENCE, a devout man of GOD who lived in the seventeenth century, learned so thoroughly the secret of praying without ceasing that his letters were collected into a book as an example for the rest of us. The book is called *The Practice of the Presence of GOD*.

When Brother Lawrence first served in the kitchen of the monastery, he disliked his work; but feeling that he should do everything for the love of GOD and with a prayer that he might do the work well, he found during the fifteen years he spent in the kitchen that everything was easy to do. He saw that GOD was as much in the kitchen as He was at the altar. He wrote, "The time of business does not with me differ from the time of prayer; and in the noise and clutter 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 altar." That is the ultimate in Christian experience; and if he, a humble Christian in a monastery kitchen, could reach that place, so can you in your more pleasant surroundings.

May I suggest that, as a help toward this attitude, you do two things at the conclusion of your private devotions.

Select a verse to memorize, and select someone or something to be a special object of prayer during the day. Pick a verse from your promise box, so that you can keep it in your pocket and glance at it during the day, or copy one from your reading and carry it with you. If you ride to work, memorize it on the streetcar, or bus. If you work at a machine, repeat it over and over again as you operate the machine. The noise will drown out what you are saying. If you work at a desk, place the card where your eyes will fall upon it at odd moments. If you are a housewife, put it over the sink and glance at it every time you turn the faucet. No one has a better opportunity to memorize Scripture than the housewife. She can repeat the verse over and over as she peels vegetables, irons, or runs the vacuum cleaner. And the message in the words will take the drudgery out of housework. **"Oh, how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day"** (Psalm 119:97).

Decide also for whom you are going to pray, and ask the HOLY SPIRIT to bring that person often to your memory during the day. Perhaps you will decide to pray for the tracts distributed

among the Moslems. How great is the need for prayer behind the work among the Mohammedans! Or you might pray for the Nosu in China who are converted from rank heathendom. You may not know their names, but the HOLY SPIRIT can use your prayer. Or perhaps you will decide to pray for a personal friend whose faith is weak. or for someone who is going through deep waters. The decision is yours, but do decide upon something or some person. The needs are urgent.

In each of our lives there are many moments which might be turned into prayer times.

What do you do when you wait for a streetcar or a bus? Do you fret, or do you pray? Prayer is "**redeeming the time, because the days are evil**" (Ephesians 5:16). All day long as people flit in and out of your mind, take their names to the Lord with a short petition for each. If someone telephones you, breathe a prayer for her as you replace the receiver. If someone writes you a special request for prayer, place the letter in a corner of your mirror; and every time your glance falls upon it, murmur a prayer. In front of your shorthand book or whatever tool you use often in your work, place the picture of a missionary; and every time you glance at the picture, pray.

And praise the Lord a thousand times a day. Every time you glance out the window at the flowers, the trees, and the birds, thank the Lord for the beautiful world in which you live. Every time you pick up something, thank the Lord for giving it to you. "**Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father**" (James 1:17).

These are but moments given to the Lord; but perhaps you can, like Francis Asbury, devote the first ten minutes of each hour to prayer. The first American Methodist bishop, he traveled an average of five or six thousand miles a year, going over all the newly settled country to preach. When he died, he was considered the best-known man in America; and more than twenty thousand people marched behind his coffin. As he traveled, he prayed for each Methodist preacher by name, until there were so many that it was humanly impossible to do so.

You may not be able every day to devote ten minutes of each hour to prayer; but if you believe prayer is important, you will do it whenever you can - for instance, when you are traveling, when you are on a vacation, or when you have free time on Sundays. Permit yourself the joy sometimes of spending extra time with the Lord. Refuse all invitations if necessary to spend that time alone with the Lord. How precious it is to give an evening to the Lord!

Or a whole day! Perhaps you have a cold and the doctor tells you to rest. You have often lamented, "I wish I had more time to read the Word!" Did you really mean it deep down in your heart? Then this is your opportunity to read a quantity of the Word. The day before Jonathan Goforth, missionary to China, went to be with the Lord, he asked his wife, "Please read to me the Gospel of John." He was blind and could not read it for himself. She read most of it to him. Jonathan Goforth was a man greatly used of GOD, not because he read a chapter of the Bible every day, but because his desire was to read a book a day. JESUS calls, "**Come ye yourselves apart... and rest a while**"; and your "off day" is your opportunity to answer His call.

The things you would like to do may tug at our heart for a moment. We are by nature an active race; but if we once learn to measure life in the light of eternity, we shall be thankful for these stops, because they mean time to devote to the Lord. "**Delight thyself also in the Lord.**"

The work of the earth will crumble, but the quiet moments in which you learn to know GOD become a part of eternity.

Go to your room or even to bed with your Bible and your prayer list. You might add a Christian book, such as a volume of Spurgeon's sermons, or perhaps a Christian magazine. Completely relax, and "practice the presence of GOD."

After you have read a book or two of the Bible, take out your prayer list. Perhaps you have prayed faithfully each morning for those on it, but often you have had to pray hurriedly. Some mornings you had only time to say, "Lord, bless them." But on your day off you can take time really to pray for your relatives and friends, financially, physically, mentally, socially, spiritually - all the different things that you have wanted to pray. Let the Spirit of prayer pour through you for them.

Most of us are not used to long sessions of prayer, so if this idea of spending the day with GOD is new to you, try this: pray for one name; then rest a few minutes before you pray for the next friend. Suppose it does take a couple of hours, praying off and on, to remember all your friends, your neighbors, your pastor, the missionaries you know, and your relatives? You are in no hurry. GOD has taken you off life's treadmill so that you may spend a day in prayer.

There will be a temptation, especially the first two or three times you try this, to stop to read a secular magazine. Recognize the impulse for what it is, a temptation of the world to turn aside from GOD. Resist the devil and continue your spiritual meditations. Instead of the worldly magazine, no matter how interesting it appears, pick up a Christian book or booklet and read.

Fellowship with the saints, listening to their words of testimony, will encourage your heart and strengthen your faith.

As the day wears on, an ecstasy, an inner glow, will gradually flood your being; then you will understand what the Scripture means when it says, "**They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.**"

Days like this will be few, it is true. Most of the time you will have to learn to include the Lord in the humdrum paths of life, but you can learn to do as Enoch did, to "[walk] with God" (Genesis 5:24) and to say with Israel, "**I have seen God face to face**" (Genesis 32:30).

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