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The Practice Of The Presence Of God By Brother Lawrence

PUBLISHED
November 25, 2026

REFERENCE
#1795582603472058

Introduction: The Timeless Wisdom of Brother Lawrence

In a world that constantly clamors for attention, finding inner peace and a deep connection with the divine can feel like an impossible pursuit. Yet, a humble 17th-century Carmelite lay brother named Brother Lawrence discovered a simple, profound approach that has transformed the spiritual lives of millions. His collection of letters and conversations, published as **The Practice Of The Presence Of God By Brother Lawrence**, remains one of the most treasured Christian spiritual classics. This article explores the essence of Brother Lawrence's teaching, its practical applications, and why this ancient discipline is more relevant today than ever.

Who Was Brother Lawrence? A Brief Biography

Born Nicolas Herman in 1614 in Lorraine, France, Brother Lawrence came from a poor peasant family. After serving as a soldier and later as a footman, he entered the Discalced Carmelite monastery in Paris at the age of 26. He worked as a cook and, later, as a sandal-repairer for the monastery. Despite his humble duties and lack of formal theological education, Brother Lawrence developed an extraordinary intimacy with God through a simple, practical method he called "practicing the presence of God."

His wisdom was preserved posthumously through a collection of conversations recorded by a respected cleric, Joseph de Beaufort, and through a few letters that Brother Lawrence wrote. **The Practice Of The Presence Of God By Brother Lawrence**is not a lengthy treatise but a brief, accessible guide that continues to resonate across denominations and even across faith traditions.

Understanding the Core Teaching: What Is the Practice of the Presence of God?

At its heart, Brother Lawrence's practice is about maintaining a constant, unbroken awareness of God's presence in every moment of daily life. He believed that you do not need to be in a church or engaged in formal prayer to commune with God. For Brother Lawrence, washing dishes, repairing sandals, or walking through the monastery garden were all sacred opportunities to experience the divine.

He emphasized that this practice is not about intellectual effort or extraordinary spiritual experiences. Instead, it is a habit of the heart—a gentle, continual turning of the mind and soul toward God. He wrote, "The time of business does not with me differ from the time of prayer; and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquillity as if I were upon my knees at the Blessed Sacrament."

Key Principles from Brother Lawrence's Teaching

• Simplicity and Faith: Brother Lawrence insisted that you do not need elaborate methods or extraordinary qualifications. A simple, childlike faith is all that is required. "We need only to realize that God is near us, and to turn to Him from time to time," he said.

• Praise in Every Task: He encouraged offering even the most mundane chores—cooking, cleaning, working—as acts of love and worship. "We can do little things for God; I turn the omelet in the pan for the love of God," he famously remarked.

• Abandonment to Divine Providence: This practice involves complete trust in God's will and a willingness to accept everything—joy or suffering—as coming from His hand. This attitude frees the soul from anxiety and self-will.

• No Need for Great Feelings: Brother Lawrence taught that the practice does not depend on emotional highs or spiritual consolations. It is a discipline of faith, not feeling. One can practice the presence of God even in a state of spiritual dryness.

How to Practice the Presence of God Today: Practical Steps

Brother Lawrence's method is deceptively simple, but applying it consistently requires patience and persistence. Here are actionable ways to incorporate his teachings into modern life.

Start with Short, Frequent Returns

Do not attempt to sustain constant awareness of God from the start. Instead, begin with brief moments throughout the day. Set a gentle reminder on your phone or associate a daily activity—drinking coffee, opening a door, waiting in line—with a silent prayer: "Lord, I am here. Be with me." Over time, these moments increase naturally.

Transform Work into Worship

Brother Lawrence believed that every honest task, no matter how lowly, could be an offering to God. He said, "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." Try intentional mindfulness while washing dishes, typing an email, or cleaning your home. Mentally or quietly whisper a prayer of offering as you work.

Develop a Habit of Inner Silence

The world is noisy, and the mind is restless. The presence of God is cultivated in silence and stillness. Set aside a few minutes each day (or multiple short pauses) to sit quietly, breathe, and simply rest your attention on God. Do not force words or thoughts—just be present. As Brother Lawrence advised, "Let us think often that our only business in this life is to please God."

Let Go of Perfectionism

Many people give up spiritual disciplines because they fail to maintain them perfectly. Brother Lawrence himself admitted to distractions and struggles. The key is not to become discouraged but to gently return to the practice again and again. "When I fail in my duty, I confess my fault, saying, 'I shall never do otherwise if Thou leavest me to myself; it is Thou who must hinder my falling, and mend what is amiss.' Then I think no more of it."

Use Short Prayers (Aspirations) Throughout the Day

Instead of lengthy vocal prayers, Brother Lawrence favored short, heartfelt "aspirations"—brief phrases like "My God, I am wholly Yours," or "Lord, I love You." These can be said silently while driving, walking, or even during conversations. They keep the heart oriented toward God.

Overcoming Common Obstacles in This Practice

Many readers of **The Practice Of The Presence Of God By Brother Lawrence** encounter challenges. Here is how to address them.

Distraction and Busyness

Modern life is full of distractions. The solution is not to eliminate distractions but to use them as triggers. When you notice you are distracted, that moment of noticing is an invitation to return to God. Each distraction becomes a reminder. Brother Lawrence compared this to a "return" to the presence of God, and each return deepens the habit.

Lack of Feeling or Dryness

Some people feel that if they do not sense God emotionally, they are failing. Brother Lawrence taught that faith, not feeling, is the foundation. He even experienced years of spiritual dryness but continued the practice faithfully. Trust that God is present even when you cannot sense Him.

Guilt Over Imperfection

Spiritual growth is a journey. Brother Lawrence was clear that we will stumble. The remedy is not guilt but humility and trust. "We must not cease to practice this exercise because we think we are making no progress," he wrote. "Progress is made by continued practice."

The Modern Relevance of Brother Lawrence's Teaching

In an era of burnout, anxiety, and constant digital noise, the practice of the presence of God offers a countercultural way to live with peace and purpose. It resonates not only with devoted Christians but also with mindfulness practitioners and those exploring contemplative spirituality. The core idea—being fully present to the divine in every moment—aligns with modern psychology's emphasis on mindfulness, while its foundation in faith provides depth beyond mere technique.

Many contemporary authors and teachers, from Richard Foster to Thomas Merton, have drawn inspiration from Brother Lawrence. His teaching bridges the gap between monastic spirituality and everyday life, proving that holiness is possible for anyone, regardless of their station or busy schedule.

How to Read and Apply "The Practice of the Presence of God"

If you are new to this classic, the book itself is very short—often fewer than 100 pages. It can be read in one sitting, but its truths are meant to be savored slowly. Read a few pages, then pause and reflect. Try to implement one principle for a week. For example, spend one week focusing on offering your daily work to God. The next week, practice short prayers. The following week, work on inner silence. By taking small steps, the practice becomes woven into your life.

Recommended Practices for Deeper Engagement

1. Read one letter or conversation each day. Reflect on it and journal your thoughts.
2. Memorize a few of Brother Lawrence's key sayings. Keep them in mind throughout the day as mental anchors.
3. Join a small group or online community that studies this book. Discussing it with others can provide encouragement and accountability.
4. Create a physical reminder. Place a small symbol—a stone, a cross, a candle—in your workspace to prompt you to remember God's presence.

The Deeper Fruit: Transformation of Character

The ultimate goal of practicing the presence of God is not just inner peace but transformation into the likeness of Christ. Brother Lawrence experienced a profound humility, patience, and joy that impressed everyone around him. Those who consistently practice this discipline find that their temper softens, their anxiety diminishes, and their love for others grows. It is not self-effort but the presence of God that produces this fruit. As Brother

Lawrence noted, "We are as little children who must learn to walk; it is by falling that we finally succeed."

Conclusion: A Simple Path for the Modern Seeker

The Practice Of The Presence Of God By Brother Lawrence is more than a book—it is an invitation. Brother Lawrence offers no complicated theology, no rigorous techniques, and no requirement of solitude. Instead, he opens a door to a life of continuous communion with God, right in the midst of ordinary existence. Whether you are a longtime believer or just starting to explore faith, his gentle wisdom can lead you to a deeper, more joyful relationship with the Divine. Begin today, in this very moment, with a simple glance of the heart. That is all it takes to start the most beautiful journey of your life.

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