

FEBRUARY 2022

Practice of the Month

PRACTICING THE PRESENCE OF GOD

“Several times during the day... ask yourself for a moment if you have your soul in your hands or if some passion or fit of anxiety has robbed you of it... Quietly bring your soul back to the presence of God, subjecting all your affections and desires to the obedience and direction of his divine will.”

St. Francis de Sales

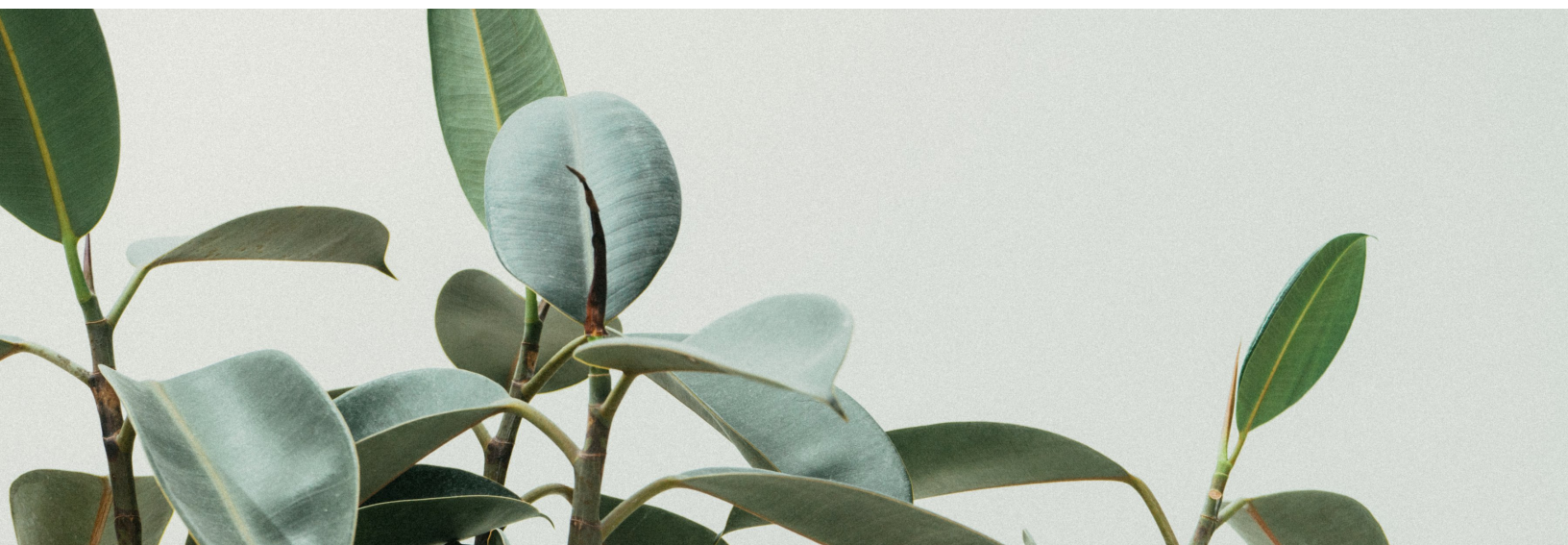
WHAT IS PRACTICING THE PRESENCE?

Practicing the presence of God is a phrase often attributed to the seventeenth-century French monk Brother Lawrence. His desire was to maintain an ongoing conversation with God no matter what he was doing. While working as a cook in a French monastery, he sought to experience God's presence in the dish pit just as much as he experienced it in the sanctuary.

Practicing the presence of God is a way of living into a deeper awareness of God's activity in our lives. Through many small pauses and acts of attention, we create a habit of turning our heart toward God with the intention of living lives more aware of our union with Him. Before we pick up the phone, we might say, "Lord I am here. Help me listen." As concerns cross our desk we might hold up a hand and turn the concern over to God before we move on. Practicing the presence of God is simply a way we love him and stay connected to him throughout the day.

WHERE DO WE SEE JESUS ENGAGE IN THIS?

As you read the gospel accounts of the life of Jesus, it's apparent how important prayer was to him. Time and time again, the writers record Jesus praying. While he often distanced himself from others to commune with his Heavenly Father (Matthew 14:23, Mark 1:35, Luke 5:16; 9:18; 22:39-41), this wasn't the only way he engaged in prayer. Jesus also practiced prayer in such a way that he seemingly intertwined it with everything he did. Many times in the gospel accounts, Jesus prayed to his Father while in the middle of doing something – often while engaging with other people (Matthew 11:25, John 11:41; John 12:28, John 17). In attempting to adopt the lifestyle of Jesus, practicing prayer the way he practiced prayer – in never ceasing—is critical (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Where do your thoughts go when they aren't focused on work or diverted by amusement? What do these thoughts reveal about your concerns or priorities?
- How aware are you of the possibility of meeting God during your workday?
- What is it like for you when God shows up at an unexpected moment?
- How easy is it for God to get your attention?
- When you are best able to hear God's still, small voice?
- What would it look like for you to intentionally seek deeper intimacy with God?




SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

1. Dedicate some task you are doing to the Lord. Talk to him about the task before you begin and again when you are done. Do you become any more aware of God in the process? How?

2. Offer all of yourself to God for the day ahead. Throughout the day ask yourself if you are still living your intention to be in God's presence. Do not be discouraged when you stray from your intention to live in his presence; simply begin again. God loves for you to turn your heart back to him.

3. When a song comes to mind during the day, pay attention to it. Could this song be a word of God to you? If it is, tell God what it means to you to have him come near you in this way.

4. Practice the presence in interruptions. The intention to live in the presence of Christ is a way of saying, "I am here." Throughout your day—perhaps every time you are interrupted—tell God "I am here." Remind yourself that you are in the presence of Jesus, who had time for people who questioned and interrupted. Remember that some of Jesus' most gracious miracles occurred when he was interrupted. What is it like for you to offer yourself to be present to God during interruptions?



6. Decide to stop several times throughout your day to pay attention to God and practice his presence. Set a clock to remind you. Spend five minutes reading Scripture, praying or just being with Jesus. What is this like for you?

7. Develop some prayers that help you stay awake to God. For instance, find a verse or prayer that is your waking prayer, your in-the shower prayer, your dressing prayer, your cooking prayer, your driving prayer and so on. Let these prayers lead you into deeper encounters with the God who is there. Below we have listed some sample prayers

- Wake Up Prayer: Lord, I haven't a clue what you've got in store for me today. But it's going to be exciting placing myself at your disposal to see you accomplish through me your eternal ends.
- Shower Prayer: Thank you, O Lord, for gifts of water and warmth, and for the cleansing and comfort you offer both body and soul.
- Hearing a good song prayer: Tune my heart, my mind, my life, to voice your melodies, O God.

See more sample prayers at [here](#)