

Making Friends with God II

Texts: Psalm 105:1-10, 1 John 3:1-6, 10b-11, 14-24, (Rom. 8:12-17)

September 18, 2011

As a young man I discovered a little booklet about a man who lived during the 1600's who had the most amazing relationship with God. He was a simple man named Brother Lawrence. He served as a soldier in the 30 Years War and as a clumsy footman who "broke everything," as he described himself. He had been severely injured in the war and remained painfully crippled for life. Later he entered a monastery in Paris, France where he served for 40 years. Joseph de Beaufort published the conversations they had and Lawrence's letters after his death in 1691 in the little booklet, ***The Practice of the Presence of God***. The Editor of the **Light Heart** edition says of him, "A gentle man of joyful spirit, (he) shunned attention and the limelight, knowing that outside distractions "spoils all."

Brother Lawrence explained his discovery of following a pure and uncomplicated life walking in the continual presence of God "–not from the head but from the heart." He said he kept a continual conversation with God, which he would be ashamed to stop by thinking about insignificant ordinary things. For Lawrence devoting himself only to that relationship with God which brought him **nourishment for his soul** and **great joy**. As he did his kitchen work, which he had disliked before, he made it a habit to do everything for the love of God continually asking for his grace.(p. 9)

He was not skilled or graceful man and found that many tasks he was given were beyond his abilities, so he would pray, "**Lord, I cannot do this unless you enable me.**"(p. 8) Then he found the strength and resources to complete it. And, when he failed he quickly confessed his fault realizing that he could not accomplish anything good without God's help. Or, whenever his thoughts wandered and returned to his failures he repented and found Jesus had met his every need as he gave himself and everything completely to God. He would raise his heart worshiping God in His holy presence to restore that relationship. **He lived "as if it there was none but He and I in the world."**(p. 18) It was a difficult and painful practice the first ten years which he often failed. But, in accepting his lot he discovered himself changed, and found a profound inward peace, a place of rest. (p.21)

In his second letter he wrote:

I think it is appropriate to tell you how I perceive myself before God, ... the most wretched of men ...full of faults and weaknesses, having committed all sorts of crimes. In deep regret I confess all my wickedness to Him. I ask forgiveness...abandon myself in His hands to do what He pleases...

My King is full of mercy and goodness. Far from chastising me, He embraces me with love. He

*makes me eat at His table. He serves me with his own hands and gives me the key to His treasures. He converses and delights Himself with me incessantly, in a thousand and a thousand ways... **he treats me in all respects as His favorite... I consider myself continually in his holy presence.***

Lawrence, in utter **humility**, made friends with God. Being filled with joy he treated everyone else lovingly as friends. His life is so inspiring, yet **is it possible in today's world?** The scriptures we read earlier suggest it is possible for any of us who is willing to make it their life's goal to befriend God. The passage in 1 John 3 shows us **HOW** and assures us **IT IS POSSIBLE.**

Becoming a **"friend of God" means:**

1. **Surrendering our control of our life and humbly asking God's forgiveness.**
2. **Falling in love with him because he FIRST LOVED US and forgives if we ask.**
3. **LEARNING and OBEYING God's COMMANDMENTS as Jesus taught them:**
 - a. **Love God first;**
 - b. **Love Neighbor;**
 - c. **Love Yourself**, in that order.
 - When we obey him in love we discover as Brother Lawrence did- **The presence of God.**
 - John used the term, the **Holy Spirit Abiding In Us.**
 - Paul in Romans 8 described as **Being Led By The Spirit,** not letting sin control and frighten us, but promising we are as good as Jesus' brothers and sisters.
 - Lawrence felt like he was **God's favorite**
 - **God's Friend** is how I say it.

That sounds great doesn't it? Ready to get started on this new life today? But, there is another thing that John throws in; in Vs. 16 he says **since Jesus laid down his life for us we ought to lay down our lives for one another.** I don't know about you, but I am OK with being friends with just about everybody, **in theory**, but when it comes to laying down my life for another, that's something else again. Does anybody really do that? God showed me lately that I may talk a good game but when it comes to living out the three simple rules, I don't pass if I fail just one of them. I may think I am OK with loving God and loving myself, but there are some people that are hard to love, and if I don't love them, **I don't love God either** (1 Jn. 4:20). In fact, God has showed me that **I can be one of those people who is hard to love sometimes** because of an **attitude of arrogance**, thinking I know better than others. I was crushed when I saw that about myself; it is "self-righteousness" like the Pharisees Jesus confronted. It is really impossible to love someone when you think you are better or smarter

than they are. That was a hard pill to swallow. John says it over and over throughout the book, we must love each other if we claim to love God. In fact, If we claim to love God and hate our brother or sister, **WE ARE LIARS!** Because, Loving God means loving our brothers and sisters in the church. You see, it's not about me; it's all about Jesus. I'm not perfect, can't be. Look at Jesus – **God's love in the flesh, in action.** John says in 3:18, the kind of love God requires is not just words, **but real action.** **Love is a verb.** If we see someone with a need and don't share what we have with them God's love **CANNOT be in us. But, if we let him God's love will be in action through us.**

On September 15, 2011 at 2:45 p.m. ET, President Obama gave U.S. Marine Dakota Meyer the Medal of Honor. In On Sept. 8, 2009, Meyer and Staff Sgt. Juan Rodriguez-Chavez, went against orders to launch a six-hour battle against Taliban insurgents approximately 15 kilometers south into the Ganjgal Village, Kunar Province, Afghanistan to rescue stranded troops penned down in an ambush. They encountered mortars, rocket-propelled grenades and small arms fire. And they continued going back into the line of fire. In Meyer's words, " 'You feel like a failure. Why isn't that you being carried on that bird? Why are you standing here and they're not?'" Marine officials report he saved more than a dozen Marines and two dozen Afghan soldiers.

When asked if he was a "hero" he replied, "Do you call every other Marine or soldier or anyone serving the country a hero?"

The interviewer replied, "A lot of people do."

"Then you can call me a hero." He says, "The heroes are the men and women still serving."

How are we scoring in the area of loving our neighbors? Sgt. Meyer laid down his life for others. I wonder if there may be someone else here who may be feeling the pinch from the Holy Spirit like I have been? We can be God's friends if we are willing to give up our grudges and attempts to control others. He will forgive us if we humble ourselves like Brother Lawrence. We may not be called upon to show love like Sargent Dakota Meyer, but we must **DO** what we can in God's strength.

Give it all to God. God wants us as his friends. **Are willing to pay the price? It is worth it!**