

Discipleship Groups – December Practice (Sacred Awareness) Becoming More Aware of God’s Activity in Us and Around Us

“This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.” Ps 118:24

What is your first thought when you wake in the morning? The early Celtic Christians developed practices to remind them that God is in everything.

“They assumed God’s presence and partnership from the start of the day until its close.” (Esther De Waal, *Every Earthly Blessing*)

They attached prayers to activities: prayers for waking up, prayers for falling asleep, prayers for cooking meals, prayers for the tools they used, prayers for the people they met. **Everyday prayers for an everyday awareness of God’s continual activity on this earth.**

For these people, every moment contained the possibility of God. They lived 24/7 expecting to encounter God. They lived an everyday sacredness.

Christians throughout the ages have desired to be more aware of God’s presence and activity in their everyday lives, and many spiritual practices have been developed to help heighten that awareness. A 15th century monk named Brother Lawrence explored this desire in letters to a friend that were later published as *The Practice of the Presence of God*. Brother Lawrence turned the practical routines of daily life (like washing up) into prayer practices because he wanted to experience God’s presence every moment of every day. Brother Lawrence wrote,

“The most holy and necessary practice in our spiritual life is the presence of God. This means finding constant pleasure in His divine company.”

It may seem odd to think we have to practice God’s presence when He is always present (He dwells in us!) But the truth is, although God is always with us, we are not always “with” Him. We need to be intentional about being with God, in awareness and in conversation in the everyday moments.

Here is a simple prayer framework for each day that will help us walk with God and heighten our awareness of the ever-present God in our lives: Receive the Day, Release the Day, and Review the Day.

Receive the Day: Each day is a gift from God. Practice receiving the day as a gift. When you receive a gift you say thank you. Start the day by thanking God. Pour out your gratitude. Receive with thanks as many gifts as come to mind. Then receive with thanks the gifts yet to come that day.

Release the Day: Once you have received the day as a gift from God, release it back to him. Give everything to him. Surrender everything to him, and keep your hands off! If you have anxiety over some aspect of the coming day, give it to him. Pray, “Lord, Your will, your way, in your time.” Trust him with the day. This is the day that He has made. As best you can, give the day back to God.

Review the Day: The Latin term for this practice is Examen. At the end of the day, in a quiet space, reflect of the day with God. Gently enter into prayer, thanking God for the day that is about to conclude. Ask God to walk with you through the day that has just been and to help you to remember the significant moments. Begin with your first memory of the day and walk through the day with God. Stop at those things that made your heart leap (Consolations) and those things that made your heart sink (Desolations). Reflect on them and thank God for the Consolations. Then ask God questions regarding the desolations: “Why did this event upset me?” “What do you want to teach me?” Remember, God is kind and he wants to shape us to be more like Jesus. Trust him. Take his lessons on board. Some days there are few or no real desolations. That’s ok. End this period of Examen by thanking him for the day you just experienced.