

~Other Speakers A-F: Classic Devotionals:

Excerpts from 'Devotional Classics' edited by Richard Foster and James Bryan Smith

Frank Laubach (1884-1970)

Introduction to the Author

In 1915 Frank Laubach went with his wife to the Philippine Islands as a missionary. After founding churches on the island of Mindanao, he established and became dean of Union College in Manila. In 1930 he returned to Mindanao to work with the Mohammedan Moros who regarded the Christian Filipinos as their enemies. Laubach, however went with a heart filled with the presence of God and sought only to live among them, not trying to coerce them into Christianity but living each moment with them with a sense of God's presence.

It is estimated that through his educational efforts he was responsible for teaching 1/2 of the 90,000 people in that area to read and write. More than that, he has brought thousands of people to a richer experience of God. The following comes from letters he wrote during his Mindanao stay.

Excerpts from 'Letter by a Modern Mystic'

1. Open Windows

To be able to look back and say 'This, this has been the finest year of my life' that is glorious. But anticipation! To be able to look ahead and say, 'The present year can and shall be better!' that is more glorious. I have done nothing but opened windows and God has done the rest. There has been a succession of marvelous experiences of the friendship of God.

I resolved that I would succeed better this year with my experiment of filling every minute full of the thought of God than I succeeded last year. And I added another resolve, to be as wide open toward people and their needs as I am toward God. Windows open outward as well as upward. Windows open especially downward where people need the most!

2. Submission: The First and Last Duty

Submission is the first and last duty of man. Two years ago a profound dissatisfaction led me to begin trying to line up my actions with the will of God about every fifteen minutes or every half hour. Others said it was impossible. But this year I have started out trying to live all my waking moments in conscious listening to the inner voice, asking without ceasing, 'What, Father, do you desire said? What, Father do you desire done at this minute.'

3. Feeling God in Each Moment

I am taking a deliberate act of will, enough time from each hour to give God much thought. Making a deliberate choice of my will to have God direct my words and actions for His glory. Looking for His leadership in my everyday life. I am desiring to be enslaved to the will of God every moment of every day. Do not try this unless you are dissatisfied with your spiritual life as it is.

4. Moment by Moment

Moment by moment, every waking moment, surrender, responsiveness, obedience, sensitivity, surrender, pliability, 'lost in His love', that is what I want to explore with all my energy, with all His grace. It means two burning passions: First to be like Jesus. Second, to respond to God as a violin responds to the bow of the master. Open your heart and soul and entertain the glory of God and after a while that glory will be reflected outward to others.

5. Undiscovered Continents of Spiritual Living

The sense of being led by an unseen hand which takes mine while another hand reaches ahead and prepares the way, grows upon me daily. I determine to lie in bed until I have that mind set. But how practical is this for the average man?....What about the plowman. With my eyes on the furrow and my hands on the lines, but my thoughts on God. That's it! An hour spent like this by a night watchman might be the glorious hour ever lived on the earth. (The idea here is do your job but keep your thoughts on God and look to Him to lead and guide you through the day)

6. Can it be done?

We can not keep one thing in mind more than a few seconds before it flows away and another thought fills the space. Concentration is merely the continuous return to the same problem from a million angles. this is the problem then: Can I bring God back in my mind-flow every few seconds so that God shall always be in my mind as an image, can He always be an element in every concept and precept? I have chosen to make this my life experiment.

If you are like me, this is a strong diet to handle. Let me make it more simple. Any hour of any day may be made perfect by merely choosing. It is perfect if one looks to God that entire hour, waiting for His leadership all through the hour and trying hard to do everything exactly as God wishes it to be done.

7. Letting God Control

This morning I started out fresh by finding a rich experience of God in the sunrise. then I tried to let Him control my hands while I pound on the typewriter. There is nothing we can do except throw ourselves open to God. ther is, there must be so much more of Him that He can give us. It ought to be tremendously helpful to be able to acquire the habit of reaching out strongly after God's thoughts and to ask 'God, what have you put into my mind now if only I can be obedient?'

Read: Psalm 139:1-10, 17-18, 23-24

Reflection

1. Describe how you feel about you spiritual life right now.
2. Laubach refers to the practice of God's presence as an act of the will.
To what is he directing his will? What thoughts? What actions?
3. The author describes the practice as a habit. What thoughts are you in the habit of thinking?
How does your thought life shape who you are?
4. Laubach writes 'There is...so much more of Him than He can give us' Over the past few years, what things has God given
to you? What keeps Him from being able to give you more?
5. According to Psalm 139, is there anyplace we can go to escape the presence of God? How do you feel about the constant
presence of God in your life?
6. Try Laubach experiment of thinking of God each moment. Try it for 10 minutes...an hour, half a day, the whole day.
Write down your experiences.
7. Submission is key to experiencing God moment by moment. As you go through your tasks this week, deliberately pause
to listen for God's counsel, and attempt to line up your actions with God's will as often as you can think of it.
8. Make the psalmist's prayer your prayer (Psalm 139:23-24) this week. Ask God to search your heart and mind as
you endeavor to experience God this week.