

February 10, 1931 - We are what we are now -

If there is any contribution that I have to make to the world that will live, surely it must be my experience of God on Signal Hill. This afternoon I climbed my way to the top weighted with a sense of remorse. Everything wrong that I have done in twenty years came back and made me feel like a dreadful sinner. I told God about it, but do not intend to write any confessions here. We are so eager to judge people by their past, and it is not fair. We are what we are now, not an hour ago, and what we are planning, not what we are vainly trying to forget.

As I stood on the top very much inclined to let the tears break out of my eyes, my tongue stopped talking to God and began talking from God to me. "Ah, little child, I have hurt you tonight, and now I feel sorry with you. All you have confessed is true, but I love you still. I love you for coming here and telling me about it. I love you for hungering after me. I love you for being willing to be better. That is all I ask of people. Ah, I have wanted to do so much for you as soon as you would allow it. Now, with a sore and lonesome heart you are ready. And after this torture I must pull you close to my heart, tiny little one."

I must learn a continuous silent conversation of heart to heart with God while looking into other eyes and listening to other voices.

Experiencing the Presence of God

Chapter 11: Reconciliation Through Needed Pain

And into my heart there stole another new love for God I never knew so strongly before. I felt like saying:

"God, I do not know Thee nor this universe nor my own self. Everything becomes more mysterious the longer I think about it. But I thank Thee that Jesus showed us that Thou art burning, yearning, eager to do more for us than Thou canst. Thou art like those plowmen who must break the soil and tear it apart before seeds will grow. Thou hast plowed my heart tonight until it is tender and ready for something to grow. I thank Thee, God, I thank Thee, because I could not have felt thine healing hand if the pain had not been so acute.

"God, how can we reconcile this need of pain with our effort to abolish all misery?"

The answer seemed convincing to me:

"If you abolish the physical suffering of the world, there will still be disappointed love, yearnings which cannot be satisfied, which will leave hearts bleeding even as they do today. Mansions have as many burning hearts as do poor houses. The things which drag men down to grossness and incessant selfishness must be wiped out. Then hearts will become sore over infinitely larger things than selfish needs. They will learn to bleed for a world with the heart of Jesus." There will be more suffering than today, for only love knows how to suffer divinely. But the meanness of suffering for one's own selfish disappointments will be gone, and we will see a magnificence and sublimity in suffering that will make us glad.

February 25, 1931- Why don't we always hear Thy voice?

As I lay on the warm earth on Signal Hill last night I asked God the question: "Why is it that Thou dost allow us on this earth to do nearly all the talking? Why do we not always hear Thy voice, since Thou art so much wiser than we are?" Instantly back came the answer. I could see it, from beginning to end, in a second, though it may require more than a minute to write it down. So many of these thoughts from God are hurled at me in an instant like that:

"When you are teaching the Moros to read, your art is to say as little as you can and leave them to say as much as they will. That is why I leave you to do and say as much as you can, while I say little. You learn by doing, even when you make mistakes and correct them. You are to be sons and daughters of God, and now you are taking the first feeble steps of infants. Every step you take alone is infinitely more important than you now imagine, because the thing I am preparing you for exceeds all your imagination. So the talking you do to me is essential. The talking others do to you, when they are trying to talk up to your expectations is more important than the talks you give to them. This is the best way to act: Talk a great deal to me. Let others talk a great deal to you, appreciating everything fine they say and neglecting their mistakes."

March 3, 1931 - How much of this glory can one carry into business?

Oh, if we only let God have His full chance He will break our hearts with the glory of His revelation. That is the privilege which the preacher can have above others. It is his business to look into the very face of God until he aches with bliss. And that is how I feel this morning after two hours of wonderful thinking with God. And now on this "mount of transfiguration" I do not want ever to leave.

**Choosing Christ brings mystery,
rejecting Him brings despair.**

I choose to look at people through God, using God as my glasses, colored with His love for them. Last year, as you know, I decided to try to keep God in mind all the time. That was rather easy for a lonesome man in a strange land. It has always been easier for the shepherds, and the monks, and anchorites than for people surrounded by crowds.

But today it is an altogether different thing. I am no longer lonesome. The hours of the day from dawn to bedtime are spent in the presence of others. Either this new situation will crowd God out or I must take him into it all. I must learn a continuous silent conversation of heart to heart with God while looking into other eyes and listening to other voices. If I decide to do this it is far more difficult than the thing I was doing before. Yet if this experiment is to have any value for busy people it must be worked under exactly these conditions of high pressure and throngs of people.

Loneliness to Never Alone - Frank Laubach

March 3, 1931 - (continued)

There is only one way to do it. God must share my thoughts of Moro grammar, and Moro epics, and type, and teaching people to read, and talking over the latest excitement with my family as we read the newspapers. So I am resolved to let nothing, nothing, stop me from this effort save sheer fatigue that stops all thought.

One need not tell God everything about the people for whom one prays. Holding them one by one steadily before the mind and willing that God may have His will with them is the best, for God knows better than we what our friends need, yet our prayer releases His power, we know not how.

I propose to make a strenuous effort of the will to concentrate upon each person I meet alone and to send him my thought of God. I propose to think as hard of the will of God as I can when in crowds. Thus I hope to prove by experimentation what this will accomplish toward making a better world.

Let others talk a great deal to you. Appreciate everything fine they say and neglect their mistakes.

Choose to look at people through God, using God as glasses, colored with His love for them.

Experiencing the Presence of God

Chapter 12: At Arm's Length with God

I cannot get God by holding him off at arm's length like a photograph, but by leaning forward intently as one would respond to one's lover. Love so insatiable as the love of God can never be satisfied until we respond to the limit. Nor will He be satisfied until His aching arms receive my neighbors, too, and all the surging multitudes of the world, all of us together responding to Him and to one another.

September 28, 1931 - A gentle pressure of the Will -

When one has struck some wonderful blessing that all mankind has a right to know about, no custom or false modesty should prevent him from telling it, even though it may mean the unbarring of his soul to the public gaze.

I have found such a way of life. I ask nobody else to live it, or even to try it. I only witness that it is wonderful, it is indeed heaven on earth. And it is very simple, so simple that any child could practice it: Just to pray inwardly for everybody one meets, and to keep on all day without stopping, even when doing other work of every kind.

This simple practice requires only a gentle pressure of the will, not more than a person can exert easily. It grows easier as the habit becomes fixed. Yet it transforms life into heaven. Everybody takes on a new richness, and all the world seems tinted with glory. I do not of course know what others think of me, but the joy which I have within cannot be described. If there never were any other reward than that, it would more than justify the practice to me.

Today I have noticed that when I forget other people I become fatigued rather quickly. When I am reminded of my purpose and start again holding people, seen and unseen, before God, a new exhilaration comes to me, and all the fatigue vanishes.

Loneliness to Never Alone - Frank Laubach

October 11, 1931 - Deepening Discovery -

Knowing God better and better is an achievement of friendship. "When two persons fall in love there may be such a strong feeling of fellowship, such a delight in the friend's presence, that one may lose oneself in the deepening discovery of another person." The self and the person loved become equally real.

There are, therefore, three questions which we may ask, "Do you believe in God?" That is not getting very far. "The devils believe and tremble. Second, "Are you acquainted with God?" We are acquainted with people with whom we have had some business dealings. Third, "Is God your friend?" or putting it another way, "Do you love God?"

It is this third stage that is really vital. How is it to be achieved? Precisely as any friendship is achieved. By doing things together. The depth and intensity of the friendship will depend upon variety and extent of the things we do and enjoy together. Will the friendship be constant? That again depends upon the permanence of our common interests, and upon whether or not our interests grow into ever widening circles, so that we do not stagnate. The highest friendship demands growth. "It must be progressive as life itself is progressive." Friends must walk together; they cannot long stand still together, for that means death to friendship and to life. Friendship with God is the friendship of child with parent. As an ideal son grows daily into closer relationship with his father, so we may grow into closer love with God by widening into his interests, and thinking his thoughts and sharing his enterprises.

Loneliness to Never Alone - Frank Laubach