

Remain in Conversation with God

Psalm 16

God invites us into an intimate relationship that is characterized by an open, ongoing conversation. Night and day we can talk to God and listen as God counsels and instructs us. Night and day we can practice awareness of God's loving presence. Night and day we can commune with God.

To remain in conversation with God (or return to conversation with God) throughout the day and in the waking hours of the night is to "practice the presence of God." It is a way of praying described by Brother Lawrence, who talked about being in conversation with God throughout the day as he worked in the kitchen to feed all who ate at the monastery where he served.

This practice of communing and communicating with God throughout the day and night is a vital way of knowing God in the midst of the whirlwind of life.

We may not think this kind of prayer is possible or practical. But when we understand that this is not about a performance or an attempt to meet some kind of goal, but simply the basic dynamic of responding day by day to God's invitation to intimacy, we can begin to catch a glimpse of the gift this practice holds out to us, namely, the gift of an ongoing, vital, personal relationship with the living God who is with us always.

Thomas Kelly says this about the prayer of communion:

Deep within us all there is an amazing inner sanctuary of the soul, a holy place, a Divine Center, a speaking Voice, to which we may continuously return. Eternity is in our hearts, pressing upon our time-torn lives, warming us with intimations of an astounding destiny, calling us home unto Itself. Yielding to these persuasions, gladly committing ourselves in body and soul, utterly and completely, to the Light Within, is the beginning of true life. . . .

How, then, shall we lay hold of that Life and Power, and live the life of prayer without ceasing? By quiet, persistent practice in turning all our being, day and night, in prayer and inward worship and surrender, toward Him who calls in the deeps for our souls....

One can live in a well-nigh continuous state of unworded prayer, directed toward God, directed toward people and enterprises we have on our heart.*

GROUP DISCUSSION. What images come to mind when you think of prayer?

PERSONAL REFLECTION. How might it change your experience of your busyness to be able to remain in (or return to) conversation with God throughout the day and night?

In this study we will listen as the psalmist describes his relationship with God. It is a relationship characterized by communing with God throughout the day and during the waking hours of the night. *Read Psalm 16.*

1. What title would you give this psalm?

2. Make a list of all the ways the psalmist describes God.

3. How does this description of God compare or contrast to how you see God?

4. What difference might it make in our lives to see God in the ways the psalmist sees God?

5. This psalm describes a dynamic relationship between the psalmist and God. What actions does the psalmist take in this relationship?

6. What actions does God take?

7. What might it mean for God to counsel us (v. 7)?

8. What gifts does the psalmist describe that have come from his relationship with God?

9. In what ways does this description of the psalmist's relationship with God and the gifts that come from it mirror some of your experience?

10. What might the psalmist mean in verse 8 when he says, "I keep my eyes always on the LORD"?

11. What might this mean in your own life?

12. What are some practical ways that you might do this?

Thank God, who is with you always, for offering to counsel you and instruct you throughout the day and night.

Now or Later

Read and meditate on Psalm 63:1-8. Write about your reflections.

Write a psalm of your own, describing how you have come to see and experience God's loving presence in your life and describing how these experiences have affected your life.

Daily prayer: Lord, keep me in ongoing conversation with you today. May I share my thoughts and concerns and gratitude with you and listen to your counsel and instruction.