

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

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The Presence of God

This is inspired by an author called Brother Lawrence who wrote, "Practicing the presence of GOD." The book's message reminded me of the value of experiencing GOD as much as we can on this earth. There may be different ways of doing so; and I want to increase His presence in my life and be aware that wherever I go there will be the presence of God. Instead of saying it's time to go to work, I want to say, "Time to practice the presence of GOD." This is because every situation should be about God. In one way or another, the relationship is between us as servants and GOD as our master. Everyone and everything else is just assisting this relationship. Is He our GOD alone and do we worship Him alone or not? Is our relationship a master/servant one? Or a master and a wannabe master one?

I think we should think about our purpose and our goal in life; and how we can move towards it. Brother Lawrence in his book reminds us: "That the end we ought to propose to ourselves is to become, in this life, the most perfect worshippers of GOD we can possibly be, as we hope to be through all eternity."

How can we say we desire to go to heaven and be close to GOD if we don't appreciate His presence here?

Brother Lawrence continues: "We have a GOD who is infinitely gracious and knows all our wants."

[53:24] What is it that the human being desires? [53:25] To GOD belongs both the Hereafter, and this world.

[4:28] GOD wishes to lighten your burden, for the human being is created weak.

Mathew 6:19-21: "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Isn't being close to GOD our treasure? Are we building up our treasure chest of moments of remembering GOD and His presence?

James 4:8: *Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you...*

Psalm 63:6-8: *When I remember You upon my bed, and meditate on You in the watches of the night; for You have been my help, and in the shadow of Your wings I will sing for joy. My soul clings to You; Your right hand upholds me.*

We know GOD's presence is real because the Quran tells us: *[2:115] To GOD belongs the east and the west; wherever you go there will be the presence of GOD. GOD is Omnipresent, Omniscient.*

[55:27] Only the presence of your Lord lasts. Possessor of Majesty and Honor.

If we look at the Quran we can see that we cannot see GOD with our eyes or stand in His physical presence.

[7:143] ... He said, "You cannot see Me. Look at that mountain; if it stays in its place, then you can see Me." Then, his Lord manifested Himself to the mountain, and this caused it to crumble. Moses fell unconscious...

[42:51] No human being can communicate with GOD except through inspiration, or from behind a barrier, or by sending a messenger through whom He

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reveals what He wills. He is the Most High, Most Wise.

I think that the real eyes of practicing the presence of GOD are the eyes of the heart. Although we can't see GOD through our physical eyes, perhaps we can experience the presence of GOD through our hearts. We can experience GOD by spending time with Him. We can work on our sincerity when we say we worship GOD alone and want to be near Him in heaven. Are we practicing here how we want to be in heaven?

We can increase the joy in our lives by reverently practicing GOD consciousness. We can offer every decision to GOD. When we recite an Al-Fātehah, we can try to offer our life's situation to GOD when we say, "guide us." We are reminded to be stewards of our body and not owners. When every action we do is being done as an offering to please GOD, our works can be as joyful as our love of Him.

When we give gifts, if it's to one we love, we choose the present and the gift wrap and wrap it nicely without pokey edges. When we do our works, we practice the presence of GOD by doing it as an offering to GOD and being mindful of pokey edges.

[2:263] Kind words and compassion are better than a charity that is followed by insult. GOD is Rich, Clement.

Brother Lawrence wrote: "I engaged in a religious life only for the love of GOD, and I have endeavored to act only for Him; whatever becomes of me ... I will always continue to act purely for the love of GOD. I shall have this good at least, that till death I shall have done all that is in me to love Him."

So how can we practice the presence of GOD? Brother Lawrence says: "That there needed neither art nor science for going to GOD, but only a heart resolutely determined to apply

itself to nothing but Him, or for His sake, and to love him only."

Those who repeat chants or prayers may do so to try to hold fast to the presence of GOD. Holding fast to the presence of GOD may be different for each individual. It may be remembering that GOD is watching us and over us. It keeps us from making soul mistakes and gives us comfort.

We can practice the presence of God by being God-centered, not being desperate or running. *[41:49] ... And when adversity befalls him, he turns despondent, desperate.*

We can be willing to do 'difficult' jobs. *[2:143] ... It was a difficult test, but not for those who are guided by GOD. GOD never puts your worship to waste. GOD is Compassionate towards the people, Most Merciful.*

We must not only pray to God but listen to God. *[6:36] The only ones to respond are those who listen.*

We must offer our current moment to God. Brother Lawrence wrote that he "found it the shortest way to go straight to Him by a continual exercise of love, and doing all things for His sake." If you were going to offer your day of work to GOD, what would you do? How might you approach things?

The practice of GOD's presence is made in the offering. For example, when I sit in reflection of GOD, I am offering my time, my breath and my presence to Him. When I am washing dishes, I can offer my appreciation and remembrance of Him during scrubbing as a way to please Him.

When we are in GOD's presence we aren't trying to get anywhere. We are already here. There is a saying that says, wherever you go, there you are. And we know from the Quran that the presence of GOD is everywhere you turn.

Brother Lawrence wrote: "That our sanctification did not depend upon ... our works, but in doing that for GOD's

sake, which we commonly do for our own. That it was lamentable to see how many people mistook the means for the end, addicting themselves to certain works, which they performed very imperfectly, by reason of their human or selfish regards."

"... we ought, once for all, heartily to put our whole trust in GOD, and make a total surrender of ourselves to Him, secure that He would not deceive us."

[33:3] And put your trust in GOD. GOD suffices as an advocate.

[89:28] Return to your Lord, pleased and pleasing.

[29:5] Anyone hoping to meet GOD, (should know that) such a meeting with GOD will most assuredly come to pass. He is the Hearer, the Omniscient.

Rizwan

References

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Brother Lawrence, Practicing the Presence of God

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[57:4] He is the One who created the heavens and the earth in six days, then assumed all authority. He knows everything that enters into the earth, and everything that comes out of it, and everything that comes down from the sky, and everything that climbs into it. He is with you wherever you may be. GOD is Seer of everything you do.

God is With You Now

[58:7] Do you not realize that GOD knows everything in the heavens and everything on earth? No three people can conspire secretly without Him being their fourth, nor five without Him being the sixth, nor less than that, nor more, without Him being there with them wherever they may be. Then, on the Day of Resurrection, He will inform them of everything they had done. GOD is fully aware of all things.

Our Freedom, Our Responsibility

One of the great blessings given to us by God Almighty is freedom. But contrary to what the word may mean on the surface, freedom means responsibility and it means submitting to the laws set by God, the provider of our true freedom.

33:72 We have offered the responsibility (freedom of choice) to the heavens and the earth, and the mountains, but they refused to bear it, and were afraid of it. But the human being accepted it; he was transgressing, ignorant.

Freedom, like all the other blessings in our life, is a gift from God, and not something we initiate, create, design or control. Because of that, it has to follow His law. The believers know very well that their creation, their life and their death are all controlled by God's laws. We were not given the freedom to choose the time or place of our birth or our death, to choose our parents or our siblings, to choose the color of our eyes or complexion of our skin, the capabilities of our brain or the sharpness of our vision, the size of our wealth or the extent of our wisdom. But we were given the most significant kind of freedom, to believe in God or not. After that God takes control.

We asked God to come here to choose to worship Him alone (or not). God is just and fair, and part of our test is that the opposition (in this case Satan) is allowed to present his own version of freedom. It was part of the deal to allow us to choose between the two styles of freedom, between the good and the bad, or between God and Satan.

Satan makes his style of freedom appealing to his constituents by enticing them with all his power. *17:64 "You may entice them with your voice and mobilize all your forces and all your men against them, and share in their money and children, and promise them. Anything the devil promises is no more than an illusion.*

To entice the weak at heart, Satan presents his laws that defy God's laws in the name of freedom. But like all of Satan's promises, his freedom is no more than an illusion, as God said. Satan invites the people to use drugs in the name of freedom. But after using drugs they become addicted and lose their will. They become prisoners of their habit, prisoners of Satan. Many times, they must lie, cheat, steal, corrupt others and even kill to get their drugs. They lose their freedom and even worse than that, they lose their souls. Satan invites people to defy God's law of marriage by enticing them to have sexual relationships outside of marriage or even different "lifestyles" of sexual relationships, in the name of freedom. These kinds of sexual practices lead to broken hearts, broken homes, single parents, orphaned children, and serious diseases. Those who follow their lusts lose their will and their self-control, and with that, they lose their freedom and become prisoners of their bad behavior. Their soul's happiness is replaced by pain. Satan's promise is again an illusion.

We need to remind ourselves constantly that God gives us the freedom and He is the One in control of this world and our life. *3:109 To God belongs everything in the heavens and everything on earth, and all matters are controlled by God.*

God promised us, if we follow His law we will have happiness in our life and freedom; but if we choose freely to follow Satan's law seeking "freedom", then we will find nothing but illusion. Following God's law is the style of freedom that guarantees happiness and victory in this world and in the Hereafter. We are commanded in the Quran repeatedly to advocate righteousness and forbid evil and promote God's laws.

22:41 They are those who, if we appointed them as rulers on earth, they would establish the Contact Prayers (Salat) and the obligatory charity (Zakat) and would advocate righteousness and forbid evil. God is the ultimate ruler.

9:112 They are the repenters, the worshippers, the praisers, the meditators, the bowing and prostrating, the advocates of righteousness and forbidders of evil, and the keepers of God's laws. Give good news to such believers.

3:104 Let there be a community of you who invite to what is good, advocate righteousness, and forbid evil. These are the winners.

God created this universe, and He knows best what makes the people free and what does not, what makes the people happy and what makes them miserable. We do not create our own freedom or happiness; they are gifts from God. It is given ONLY to those who follow God's laws. Anything else is nothing more than a fake freedom and false happiness.

God sent us laws for our personal use and others for our community to be used in pursuit of the true freedom. He gave us clear commandments to believe in Him, His angels, His scriptures, and His messengers. *2:285 The messenger has believed in what was sent down to him from his Lord, and so did the believers. They believe in God, His angels, His scripture, and His messengers: "We make no distinction among any of His messengers." They say, "We hear, and we obey. Forgive us, our Lord. To You is the ultimate destiny."*

On the personal level, we are free to accept these commandments or not. No one should try to force anyone to believe.

No Compulsion in Religion

2:256 There shall be no compulsion in religion: the right way is now distinct from the wrong way. Anyone who denounces the devil and believes in GOD has grasped the strongest bond; one that never breaks. GOD is Hearer, Omniscient.

4:140 He has instructed you in the scripture that: if you hear God's revelations being mocked and ridiculed, you shall not sit with them, unless they delve into an-

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other subject. Otherwise, you will be as guilty as they are. God will gather the hypocrites and the disbelievers together in Hell.

We live in communities and nations that follow many laws and occasionally we are asked to freely vote in support of some of these laws. We, as believers, should not support or advocate for laws that are unrighteous. When the corrupt people who oppose God's law are trying to force their own law (Satan's law) on everyone, the believers make their stand clear in support of God's law. Freedom is not gained by breaking God's law but rather by upholding it.

9:67 The hypocrite men and the hypocrite women belong with each other—they advocate evil and prohibit righteousness, and they are stingy. They forgot God, so He forgot them. The hypocrites are truly wicked.

In contrast:

9:71 The believing men and women are allies of one another. They advocate righteousness and forbid evil, they observe the Contact Prayers (Salat) and give the obligatory charity (Zakat), and they obey God and His messenger. These will be showered by God's mercy. God is Almighty, Most Wise.

These believers are the keepers of God's

laws and the Quran urges the believers to be united in Submission to God. 3:103 *You shall hold fast to the rope of God, all of you, and do not be divided.*

As Submitters, we must steadfastly persevere in observing God's laws even if we're in the minority. We must side with God all the time or we would be siding with Satan. Satan himself will not side with us: 59:16 *They are like the devil: he says to the human being, "Disbelieve," then as soon as he disbelieves, he says, "I disown you. I fear God, Lord of the universe."*

In conclusion, we all have the freedom to worship God alone or not. With our freedom comes the responsibility of making the right choice. The road to eternal happiness and true freedom lies in freely choosing to submit to God and to observe His laws.

33:35 The submitting men, the submitting women, the believing men, the believing women, the obedient men, the obedient women, the truthful men, the truthful women, the steadfast men, the steadfast women, the reverent men, the reverent women, the charitable men, the charitable women, the fasting men, the fasting women, the chaste men, the chaste women, and the men who commemorate GOD frequently, and the commemorating women; GOD has prepared for them forgiveness and a great recompense.

Frank

Be included in our email list for weekly reminders

God has blessed us with the opportunity to send weekly reminders to submitters in our email list. The weekly reminder email is not very long. It usually consists of the topic of the week, and the corresponding Quranic verses and links to get more information from. The reminder is sent every Thursday, God willing.

[51:55] And remind, for the reminder benefits the believers.

We would like every submitter, whether receiving our newsletters or not, to be included in the list. God willing you can join the list by sending an email to info@masjiduntucson.org and saying that you want to be in the weekly reminder list. If you want to make it a really short email, write "weekly reminder" in the subject line and send it. Or join via: <https://masjiduntucson.org/current/weekly.html>

If you also include in the email the city and state that you live in, God willing we can compile this information and use it for the submitters without a community who are asking to communicate with other submitters in their area.

Please help us to help you and other submitters by joining the list and by being proactive, God willing.

[3:200] O you who believe, you shall be steadfast, you shall persevere, you shall be united, you shall observe GOD, that you may succeed.

[87:9] Therefore, you shall remind; perhaps the reminder will benefit.

Your comments are also welcome and appreciated.