

Refresh Your Soul

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The Deeper Devotion e-letter

Volume 4, Advent 2009

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Present with Emmanuel

Part 3 of a series on *Choosing Stillness*

December is an unlikely time for an article on stillness. You may wonder if it's even worth trying to still your soul in the midst of all the extra preparations, festivities, shopping, performances. I'll confess that once I missed a pre-Advent publishing date for this letter, I considered not writing it, for would it even get read?

But hold on a second! Something tells me that the season's built in busyness makes the quest for stillness all the more **essential**.

Essential, but is it a **realistic**? I guess that comes down to how essential we realize it to be. There must be a way to arrive at Christmas Eve with a sense of having lived the season spiritually.

Emmanuel. God With Us. He is with us *as* we go about fulfilling our commitments. Brother Lawrence was a master at staying aware of God's presence while busy in the kitchen, traveling to commitments, preparing for visitors and meeting deadlines.

Lawrence's simple discipline of practicing the presence of God is appropriate for us who want to embrace the Saviour this season. Some wisdom from the *Gathered Thoughts* section of his book:



Lawrence committed his work day to the Lord and **asked for the grace** to live in God's presence. His prayer could be one for us as well: "Accept the labour of my hands and dwell within my heart with all thy fullness."



He prayed as he worked, aiming to carry on a **continual conversation with God** as he offered up his little acts of service and as he asked for God's grace.



When he finished his work he **reflected upon** how he'd performed his duty. If well, he gave God thanks; if poorly, he sought God's pardon.



When he wandered from God's presence he **simply returned** to where we wanted to be. Lawrence knew the beauty of grace and was free from the burden of guilt.



Lawrence advises beginners to offer simple **prayers inspired by love** such as *Lord, I am all Yours, God of love I love You with all my heart, or Lord use me as You desire.*

Deeper Devotion News

#1 My long-awaited certification is in hand. The CSD designation (certified spiritual director) affirms that I've developed competency and maturity in my field. Three years of hard work, intentional growth, wise counsel and much grace have brought me to this place. I praise God for granting me the privilege of listening to people's stories and helping them to uncover what lies hidden in their hearts as they seek to grow with God. This ministry is a privilege and a joy.

#2 The development of my new website is progressing well. My translators and graphic designer are working away, as am I. Stay tuned for the announcement of its launch.

The Deliverer

A Biblical reflection from my *Holy Land Tour*

We sat atop Tel Azekah, site of an ancient Israelite city. Below us stretched a wide valley which provided access from the coastal plain up to the mountains of Judah. Bethlehem lay over the ridge, just beyond our view.

We looked out over the valley where Saul's troops had assembled against the Philistines. The situation looked bleak until young **David** walked down that valley to defeat the enemy.

We read the story of David's confrontation with Goliath and traced with our eyes the path to the Philistine cities on the coastal plain. Seeing the lay of the land brought the dynamics of the story to life.

Then came one of the trip's **aha moments**.

Our professor advanced the calendar 300 years. The Assyrians had destroyed Israel and were moving down the coast toward Egypt, leaving destruction in their wake. All of Judah was shaking in her sandals out of fear for the superpower. Survival seemed impossible.

Enter the prophet **Micah** who lived in a town on a nearby hill. He looked up this valley and remembered the deliverer who had once walked down from Bethlehem with a sling-shot in his hand. Then he spoke hope to his people as he foresaw another Deliverer.

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times." (Micah 5:2)

After Emmanuel was born he traveled this valley in his fleeing parents' arms, an unlikely Deliverer. Yet his mission of providing hope when all hope is gone was fulfilled indeed. **Emmanuel.** As we celebrate his birth, may we remain aware of **God's presence with us.**

Christmas Joy to you!

Elizabeth