

# 1 FIRST CONVERSATION: (THE LIFE AND THOUGHTS OF BROTHER LAWRENCE)



At last, I ran into him . . . Brother Lawrence! He shared with me some amazing thoughts about his journey with God and how God had transformed his life with incredible grace when he was eighteen years old. Before that transformation, he was living and thinking just like the rest of the world.

His transforming journey began in a rather odd way. One day, he was just looking at a barren tree, empty with no leaves. Suddenly, he began imagining how the branches would soon put forth buds, which would turn into vibrant, colorful flowers and fruit. As he thought about this miraculous new life that was about to take place in the tree, he realized that God does a very similar miraculous work in the lives of people.

Ever since that moment, he has never forgotten what he realized that day. More importantly, from that time on he has lived and thought very differently from the rest of the world. He developed a love for God so deep that for over forty years now he has not been attracted to the world and what it desires. Rather, his life has been on fire with a passion for God.

Brother Lawrence explained to me how he used to work for Mr. de Fieubet, the treasurer for the king. His job was certainly nothing of great importance—he basically ran alongside Mr. de Fieubet's carriage to make sure that the journey went well. Not only did he have a menial job, but talk about an accident always waiting to happen! Brother Lawrence was incredibly clumsy. If you had anything breakable in his path, beware!

Throughout his life, Brother Lawrence had wanted to get into religion. He thought that somehow by becoming religious he could make up for his clumsiness. He believed that by handing his life entirely over to God and by giving up everything in life

that's enjoyable, he could make up for his shortcomings. In his mind, he equated being religious with being miserable. But God got the last laugh on him! Once Brother Lawrence gave everything to God, all he ever experienced was contentment, satisfaction, and peace. Over and over again he would say to God, "Wow! Did You ever outsmart me!"

Brother Lawrence shared with me that we can stand firm in God's presence by having a continual conversation with God. How tragic it is when the insignificant stuff of everyday life keeps us from having intimate conversations with God. Just as we nourish our bodies with food and water, we should nourish our minds with thoughts about God. The simple act of spending time with God brings a joy into our daily life that is next to impossible to describe.

Brother Lawrence also believes that our weak faith in God is pitiful! We should pour fuel on our faith and let it explode in our lives so that it becomes a glowing, burning-hot faith. Rather than having quick, often mindless, devotions—you know, those little "devotional happy thoughts for the day" that we treat like energy-boosting vitamins—our faith should go much deeper. This deeper faith has to be more than the pop religion of our culture; it has to be built upon the spirit of the Church itself. If we have this deeper faith then we are on the road to the perfect life.

To get this deeper faith, Brother Lawrence believes that we should give everything to God . . . *totally*. Not only should we hand over the everyday "stuff" of life—you know, those things that are here today but gone tomorrow—but we should also hand over all those things that we think are religious. In other words, we give God our whole lives, even down to our spiritual practices that we use to draw close to Him. When we completely give it all to God, we'll find that our greatest purpose in life is doing whatever He wishes for us to do. Sometimes living God's way will mean that we go through seasons where the sun is not shining, and we are just feeling our way through to-

tal darkness trying to hold on. Other times, following God's way will mean that the sun beams down with such brilliance and warmth that we are almost blinded by the light and overwhelmed by the heat. Once we've truly given our lives to what God wants, there's really no difference between the darkness of the bad times and the brilliance of the good times.

As we experience seasons of dryness in our walk with God—and we will—the most important thing to do is to hang tough, don't give up, and hold on to our trust in God. These seasons of dryness can often show our love for God for what it really is: whether it's the real thing or something we've just been faking. During the dry times, we should let go of whatever we might be clinging to and give it all to God. Even just one small act of giving ourselves to God will take us deeper in our journey with Him.

Brother Lawrence then told me that when he heard about the pain, misery, and brokenness in the world, he wasn't all that surprised. In fact, it was just the opposite. He was more surprised that there wasn't greater pain, misery, and brokenness. He said when you really think about the terrible effects that human rebellion is capable of producing, we're pretty fortunate that we don't see even worse things in the world. He prays for people whose lives are trapped in rebellion against God. However, because he knows that God is more than capable of bringing about change in their lives, he doesn't let himself get uptight over it.

He then told me if we're really going to become totally God's the way that God wishes we would, then we need to be constantly on guard and alert. In particular, we have to keep watch over our heart's desires and our daily habits. We've got to know which of our desires and urges particularly impact our journey with Him. We also need to be totally aware of everyday routine activities that we participate in. But there's no need to get uptight about it. For disciples who really want to be one with God 24/7, God will help them make sure they

stay on top of it. Then Brother Lawrence told me that I could come to him anytime that I needed to as long I kept my desire to be one with God. He told me never to worry that I might be bothering him if I wanted to talk about being completely abandoned to God.

## 2 SECOND CONVERSATION: (A GENUINE LOVE, AN AUTHENTIC WALK)



I had another amazing conversation with Brother Lawrence today. This time he shared with me that one motivation—his love for God—determines everything in his life. He has no other interest. What he told me opened my mind to a whole new way of looking at things: His primary focus is not on whether he will end up going to heaven or to hell when he dies; his primary focus is his love for God. He is completely determined that his love for God will be the single purpose behind every act that he does. His love for God has brought indescribable fulfillment to his life. Even in the tiniest things his love for God is what motivates him. For example, if he sees a piece of trash on the ground, he picks it up simply because he loves God and can pick up trash out of his pure love for God alone. Because he lives out of his passionate love for God, he is experiencing total satisfaction and fulfillment. He isn't looking to get gifts or special favors from God. All he wants is God himself—nothing else matters, nothing else will do!

Even though Brother Lawrence never seeks after anything from God's hand, and everything he does is motivated by love for God, God still has lavished him with never-ending gifts. (God is such a gracious gift giver. He is God and His grace overflows into our lives with tremendous generosity.) Brother Lawrence definitely experiences the love of God that is imbedded in these blessings; however, he realizes that he needs to be