

*trabecu coule la Seine et nos amours  
ours après la peine. Vienne la nuit,  
les amours reviennent. Les maux d  
que sous le cont de nos bras pas sent  
ienne la nuit son ve l'he  
omme certe eau coule e comme la vie  
e. t j'chitais cette rom ce s  
eau Phénix il me u soir m  
re et le gard qu'il ne fit b  
mavrais garçon qui sufflot ait mains d  
nde ouverte de la Mer Rouge lui le  
me ces vagues de brigues si tu ne fu  
qu'ote sa sœur épouse son armée*

# PRACTICING *the* PRESENCE --- *of* --- GOD

**STUDY GUIDE**



**Hope's 10 for 10**, which launched Nov. 2, 2019, details 10 goals for Hope in the next 10 years. With a fresh, updated vision for the next decade of ministry, we are ready to see the amazing ways God is going to move! This study is focused on goal #3, Spirit-Filled.



## **SURF**

**new waves of  
revival sent to  
the church by  
the Holy Spirit.**

Pursue the Christian faith not only as an intellectual pursuit (mind), but also an experiential relationship with a living God (heart and soul). Realize the inspiring presence in our daily lives of a miraculous God who loves, guides, inspires, heals and saves. Develop relationships (prayer and outreach) with like-minded missional churches to serve as a renewing movement within our denomination and as a prophetic witness to mainline and evangelical Christians.

2 Chronicles 7:14 | Acts 2:17 | Ephesians 3:16

**Please note:** This book is centuries old and has been printed by many different publishers in a variety of formats. The page numbers in this study correlate to the copy with ISBN 978-163171-000-1.

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## Brother Lawrence

Information on Brother Lawrence is very limited, but here are some facts from the conversations and letters (pages 1-72) that help understand the man who intimately practiced the presence of God.

Brother Lawrence was born in 1619, or about 400 years ago.

His name was Nicolas Herman, and he grew up in the French Province of Lorraine near the German frontier, being brought up in a Christian home with parents, Dominic and Louise, who were "very fine people."

Though economically poor and likely with little education, we do know Nicolas learned to read and write at some point.

At age 18 he entered the military service during the Thirty Years' War in the 19th year of that war. He fought in his home province of Lorraine and may have seen and/or participated in some, if not many, of the atrocities that occurred. He relates later in life of the "disorders of his youth," "sins of his past life," "determined to rectify his past conduct."

In 1632, Nicholas fought for the Catholic League that included the Holy Roman Empire and Spain, which fought against the protestant forces that included German, Denmark, Sweden and French protestants. Later, France, a catholic country, fought with the Swedes as they felt threatened by Spain and their ally, the Holy Roman Empire. Nicholas was caught and sentenced to die by Germans but was released because of "fearless behavior." Later Nicolas was injured in a battle between

the Swedes and French forces, which resulted in a very bad leg injury that caused him a life of pain and suffering.

Nicolas fought for a mere five years, but this would leave a mark on his heart for the years to come. After the convalescence at his parents' home, Nicolas became a hermit for a brief time. Later he was hired on as a footman to the treasurer of the King of France. This lasted only a couple of years. He relates he was clumsy, awkward and not good at his work, but did the very best he could. He was present for the treasurer's every beckoned call.

In 1640, at age 26, Nicolas again decided to live a quiet life, only this time as a monk in the Discalced Carmelite Priory. In mid-August 1642, he received his brown Carmelite habit and was re-named Lawrence of the Resurrection. He spent the remainder of his life in this community.

For Lawrence, the novitiate, the lay brothers attended with the young clerics. He feared he could not keep up with classes and duties because of his awkwardness, faults and his own unpolished simple language. But he soon found that he "experienced only satisfaction."

He fell into a dark period that lasted four years and feared he would be lost. On one hand he experienced God intimately but on the other his desire to please God in everything was the source of his distress. "The fear that I had not given myself to God as I desired, my sins always present before my eyes, and the great graces God gave me were the sum and substance of my woes. It seemed to me creatures,



reason, and even God himself were against me, but that faith alone was on my side. Once I accepted the fact that I might spend the rest of my life in this troubled state of mind ... I found myself changed all at once."

Brother Lawrence set into a life of prayer and menial work. There was little time for formal prayer as he worked in the kitchen that fed up to 100 members of the community. It was filled with much clatter and haste, which at times left him breathless. He did this for 15 years with a lame leg.

This was the time he came to the thought that he must incorporate his prayer into his daily hustle. For 10 years he worked on the techniques that would become his "practice of the presence of God."

As the years passed, his leg became only worse and he had a defined hobble. He was given a new assignment upon his third request. He became a sandal repairer for more than 200 feet of the Discalced (which means Barefoot) Carmelite, and he was also given the task to buy wine, which required a journey to Auvergne in 1665 – a three-week, 500-mile trip. He made new acquaintances outside the monastery, and made many public contacts when there was a need to raise money for the monastery. There were always beggars at the door. He helped new brothers with their assignments, and they learned his quiet ways and behaviors.

Many people from all walks of life were soon seeking Brother Lawrence to learn how to "practice the presence of God." From his eulogy for Brother Lawrence, Fe'nelon, another visitor,

deserves special note. He went to see Lawrence shortly before he died, and the memory of the meeting was still vivid 10 years later. "The words of the saints themselves," he wrote, "are often very different from the discourse of those who tried to describe them. Brother Lawrence was rough by nature but delicate in grace. This mixture was appealing, and revealed God present in him. I saw him, and there is a place in the book where, the other, without mentioning me by name, briefly related a fine conversation I had with him on death, and though he was very sick, he remained very happy." And here is Fe'nelon's reply to Bossuet: "You can always learn by studying God's action on experienced though uneducated souls. Could we not have learned the practice of the presence of God by conversing with Brother Lawrence, for example?"

Many people were brutally killed, tortured and raped on both sides of the Thirty Years' War. There was mass starvation and much disease, which took a great toll; more than 20 percent of the population was lost in those 30 years. Five to eight million lives were lost through battles and atrocities. The Thirty Years' War did not have a final battlefield victor; rather, it ended when no one had the fortitude to continue this disaster. This war was filled with many intrigues and unlikely allies. It was not uncommon for kingdoms to switch sides. Religion most likely was the impetus that started the war. Martin Luther had nailed the 95 Theses on the Wittenberg door in 1517, more than a hundred years prior to Brother Lawrence's birth. There were many battles between

Catholics and Protestants prior to the Thirty Years' War. In 1555, the Peace at Augsburg was struck, which lasted for approximately 60 years. This guaranteed principalities to choose which faith they would follow. But as new generations came into power, perceived wrongs needed to be righted and so a power struggle within the Holy Roman Empire came to a head with an incident that occurred in the city of Prague, the Defenestration (means to be thrown out the window) of Prague, that set off the Thirty Years' War. Almost all the battles occurred in central Europe. The Holy Roman Empire was ruled by the Hapsburg

family for more than 700 years, and they wanted to keep their power. They initially won many of the battles, but the tide of the conflict continued to turn as more forces from many countries entered into this long war.

Sometimes we think we have so much more chaos, less time and reasons not to take the time to seek the presence of God. Each generation has many battles to face regarding pain, time and resources to practice the presence of God. Let's move forward to learn what Brother Lawrence teaches us in a small, 90-page book.

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## Insights

When you read this little book, you will not find one Scripture reference except for John 3:16. The Bible, the book of God, is broken down by book, chapter and verse. You may ask, why no scriptural reference in Brother Lawrence's maxims? But as you read this little book, you will keep coming across pearls of wisdom that sound so familiar. Why? You soon realize that each paragraph contains spiritual truth you find in the Bible.

- Take the first sentence of Spiritual Maxim 1 on page 73: "All things are possible for the one who believes." Now look up Mark 9:23.
- Next, read the next sentence. The keywords are hope and love. Going further, read 1 Corinthians 13:12-13.
- Brother Lawrence's maxims are infused with Scripture because these men were infused with God's word daily.

- Look at the title of Spiritual Maxim 1: Faith. Go to Hebrew 11:6.  
Do you wish to reach God?

Keep exploring Scripture as you read "Practicing the Presence of God" because you will find verses that reflect Brother Lawrence's practice that are even more meaningful to you, your life and your journey.

The Scriptures we included in this study guide show the Bible to be rich and full of his invitation to be with you. Some are well-known, some are not. The object of study is not how much you read but the impact of what you are reading. God reaches us through many different stories in different context because we are all dealing with different burdens or celebrating different events in life. When you come upon Scripture that calls you, read it, pray it and breathe it in—God is there and waiting for a conversation or a pause to listen.





# Session 1:

## CONVERSATIONS

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**PRE-READING:** Conversations 1-4 (pages 1-24)

**OPENING PRAYER**

Take a few minutes to open your group meeting in prayer. Ask God to join you and thank him for guiding your discussion. Praise him as he reveals his truth to you.

**BIBLE READING:**

- Romans 12:1
- John 10:10
- James 5:15-16
- 1 Corinthians 10:13
- Galatians 5:6
- 1 Thessalonians 5:16-17
- Colossians 3:23
- Philippians 4:13
- 1 Peter 4:12-13

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. What is something that stood out to you most from the Conversations?
2. What can we learn from Brother Lawrence?
3. Brother Lawrence talks about trusting that God will give you the strength to endure struggles. Do you believe that? Why or why not? How has God provided you strength in the past?
4. Brother Lawrence talks about continual prayer throughout his day. What does this look like? Is it something you could start doing in your day?
5. How did Brother Lawrence view suffering? What did it mean for him? What opportunity did it provide?

**NOTES:**

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# PRAYER JOURNALING

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**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Today I read** \_\_\_\_\_ **chapter(s)**

**Takeaways as I read...**

\_\_\_\_\_ *How I can apply this to my life...* \_\_\_\_\_



**Dear God,**

*Teach me...*

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*You are...*

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*I confess...*

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**Specific Prayer Requests:**

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**Amen.**

## SERMON NOTES

It is important to make weekly worship a priority. It is also a great thing to do with your group. Use the following notes section to write down key points that stick out to you from each weekend's sermon. Notes are great to refer back to throughout the week so you can keep things fresh in your mind!

# Session 2:

## LETTERS

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**PRE-READING:** Letters 1-8 (pages 25-50)

**OPENING PRAYER**

Take a few minutes to open your group meeting in prayer. Ask God to join you and thank him for guiding your discussion. Praise him as he reveals his truth to you.

**BIBLE READING:**

- Matthew 20:23-27
- 1 Kings 8:61
- Romans 12:12
- Ephesians 6:18
- John 4:24
- Philippians 4:7

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. Describe Brother Lawrence’s practice of prayer. When and how did he pray?
2. What does it mean to practice the presence of God?
3. What sort of picture does Brother Lawrence paint about continual prayer and focus on God?
4. What’s something that stood out to you from the first eight Letters that you thought was helpful in your own spiritual life?
5. Is Brother Lawrence’s joy in the Lord something you would like to experience more? Why or why not?

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# Session 3:

## LETTERS *(continued)*

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**PRE-READING:** Letters 9-16 (pages 51-70)

**OPENING PRAYER**

Take a few minutes to open your group meeting in prayer. Ask God to join you and thank him for guiding your discussion. Praise him as he reveals his truth to you.

**BIBLE READING:**

- 2 Corinthians 1:3-7
- Romans 5:3-5
- Deuteronomy 31:5-6
- Matthew 7:7-12
- Ephesians 3:14-21

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. What does our work have to do with our faith? How do your work and faith intersect?
2. What does Brother Lawrence say about learning to love God more? How does that happen? What does that look like in your life?
3. What is his understanding of suffering? How does that differ from the world’s view of suffering? Why does suffering happen? What opportunity does suffering provide us?
4. What sort of prayers does Brother Lawrence pray? What does he ask God for? Why is this significant? Is this different than your prayers in the midst of suffering?

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# Session 4:

## SPIRITUAL MAXIMS

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**PRE-READING:** Spiritual Maxim One: Faith (pages 71-73)

### OPENING PRAYER

Take a few minutes to open your group meeting in prayer. Ask God to join you and thank him for guiding your discussion. Praise him as he reveals his truth to you.

### BIBLE READING:

All things are possible for the one who believes. They are not as difficult for the one who hopes, they are less difficult for the one who loves, and they are easy for the one who practices and perseveres with all three of these virtues.

**Faith** Hebrews 11

**Hope** Romans 5:3-5

**Love** 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Why did Brother Lawrence focus on the virtue of faith for his first Maxim?

We read in 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 that love is the greatest virtue of the three.

Why did he focus on faith instead of love? How do you use your faith to love others as Christ loved you? How do faith and love bring hope?

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. *"Everything we do or say or attempt to do must be done for God and for the sake of his reputation."*

1 Corinthians 10:31

2 Timothy 1:8-10

1 Timothy 4:11-16

- Is everything you do or say done for God? Does it glorify God?
- What are some descriptive words or characteristics of God's reputation?

2. *"When we enter upon the spiritual life, we must examine ourselves thoroughly, to the very depth of ourselves."*

2 Corinthians 13:5

Romans 8:35-37

- We use a mirror to examine our physical self. What tools do you use to examine your spiritual self?
- What do you draw on when you know that Jesus Christ is walking with you today?

3. *"We must consistently accept that these worldly difficulties are here for our own good."*

Psalms 119:71

1 Peter 3:14,17

2 Corinthians 1:4-5

2 Thessalonians 1:4-6

James 1:2

- Do you handle difficulties on your own or seek a friend to help you through them? How long do you wait to seek help?
- When do you talk to God about them and ask him what he wants you to learn from those difficulties and how to handle them?

4. *"The more a soul desires holiness, the more dependent she is upon God's generosity."*

Acts 2:38

Hebrews 2:16-18

1 Thessalonians 5:23-25

2 Corinthians 12:8-10

- When do you become dependent on God's generosity?
- Is it a last resort? Why or why not?

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

*"Being with God does not mean being in a church. We can make our hearts chapels into which we can withdraw, from time to time, to talk with God in gentleness, humility, and love. Everyone is capable of this intimate conversation with God."*

—Brother Lawrence

God wants to be with you all the time. As Brother Lawrence shows in his practice, when we are tuned into God, he shows up everywhere, all the time and in everything. Does this quote resonate with your experiences? Where is the easiest place for you to find God and have those intimate conversations he desires? How do you go about it in your ordinary life?

What do you learn from the physical life of Brother Lawrence through the Conversations and Letters? How do you think his physical life had an impact on his spiritual life? What are some physical afflictions you deal with? When Brother Lawrence focused on his spiritual life, how did it change his outlook on his physical afflictions?

Think about the things Brother Lawrence experienced, specifically the Thirty Years' War. What impact would this have had on Brother Lawrence? How are things similar for us to the times of Brother Lawrence? What is different? How do you deal with what is happening in the world around you?

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# Session 5:

## SPIRITUAL MAXIMS *(continued)*

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**PRE-READING:** Spiritual Maxim Two: Practices for Spiritual Living (pages 74-77)

### OPENING PRAYER

Take a few minutes to open your group meeting in prayer. Ask God to join you and thank him for guiding your discussion. Praise him as he reveals his truth to you.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. *"The most pure, comprehensive and necessary practice for spiritual living is the practice of the presence of God."*

Psalm 27:8

2 Corinthians 13:14

- God desires and invites us into fellowship. What is fellowship like with a new friend? With an old friend?
- What kind of friend is God to you, and why? What kind of friend are you to God, and why?

2. *"We must constantly try to make each thing we do become a moment of intimate communion with God ... "*

1 Corinthians 2:1-15

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

- Why was Paul's message and preaching very plain? Who does Paul rely on to give him power? How does the Holy Spirit communicate with you in ordinary times of jubilation and despair?
- Is there a difference in your time with God in ordinary times compared to receiving communion? Why or why not?

3. *"We must act thoughtfully, not with the rash impulsiveness of an undisciplined mind."*

Ephesians 5:17-20

- How does praising God help quiet your mind? What methods do you use to work quietly, calmly and lovingly before God?
- When are your thoughts and actions a gift to God? When are they not?

4. *"... We should briefly retreat from those activities as often as we can to worship God deep within our hearts ... "*

Matthew 5:16

James 4:8

- How do you break away from work, studies and life to worship God for quiet moments?
- How do you feel after you take a break with God?

5. *"All our moments of worship must be the fruit of a living faith in God."*

Matthew 22: 34-40

John 4:23-24

Colossians 1:6-10,15-20

Galatians 2:20

- How did you come to believe in God?
- What are the fruits that you receive from your living faith in God?

6. *"We must diligently examine our consciences to understand where we are most lacking when it comes to virtue."*

John 14:15-15:17

- When you hide from God, do you hide because he is so majestic or because of pride?
- How can you find in him the strength that you lack when you are tempted?

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

- Regarding retreating from activities to worship, Brother Lawrence stated, "This digression has been long but no more than the issue requires. We will now return to the broader subject." What are the things, physical or spiritual, that you need to set aside to accept God's intimate invitation?
- In Brother Lawrence's practice, he stresses God wants us to come simply and purely from our hearts. Are you so involved in waiting for the perfect time, place and words before you accept the invitation? Does God grow impatient waiting for you when he already knows and sees what is going on?
- "We must understand which sins we most often commit and the situations in which we usually fall into them." These come instantly to mind, don't they?

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# Session 6:

## SPIRITUAL MAXIMS *(continued)*

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**PRE-READING:** Spiritual Maxim Three: Worshiping God in Spirit and Truth  
(pages 78-79)

### OPENING PRAYER

Take a few minutes to open your group meeting in prayer. Ask God to join you and thank him for guiding your discussion. Praise him as he reveals his truth to you.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. *Coming to him with the kind of worship that he requires from us*

1 Chronicles 28:9      Matthew 28:8-10  
Romans 12:1-2

- Do you find worshiping God alone to be intimidating or frightening? Why or why not?
- How do you differentiate personal worship and corporate worship?

2. *Acknowledging that God is who he is and that we are who we are*

Psalm 8      Luke 4:8  
John 9:38      Romans 9:4  
Philippians 3:3      Revelation 7:11-12

- What does the majesty of God look like in your life?
- Think back to Maxim 2 and how God wants you as a companion and to commune with you ... how does it make you feel that the majestic Lord wants you?
- Do you feel the power of his love for you? That he is your source for all that is good? Why or why not?

3. *Admitting that even though God wants to make us like himself – if we only desire it – our tendency is to separate from him*

Exodus 20:2-6      1 Peter 3:15-17

- Brother Lawrence uses the phrase “Our tendency is to separate from him,” but in today’s environment, would it be more honest to say “our tendency is to be self-sufficient”? Why or why not?
- What are some experiences you have had in separation? How did it happen?
- What are ways you show respect, love, service and continual worship?

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

- Brother Lawrence speaks so clearly from the heart. He doesn't bar any thoughts from God and states our human characteristics so accurately. God wants you in his life, he desires it, and he doesn't need fancy, eloquently flowing words or a special place to meet. What's your favorite place to come to God?
- Brother Lawrence said God requires us to worship him honestly from our spirits. Is coming to church the only time you take to worship God? Is corporate worship the time you take to meet with God privately? Why or why not? Could church be a time where you and others feast with God through joint worship and praise? How would your spiritual life be different?
- What does "If only we desire it" mean to you? What's keeping you away from wanting to be like God? What is your image of God? Of yourself? Do you think God is all work and no play?

**NOTES:**

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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# PRACTICING *the* PRESENCE *of* GOD

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*You are...*

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*I confess...*

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*I'm thankful for...*

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**Specific Prayer Requests:**

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**Amen.**

## SERMON NOTES

It is important to make weekly worship a priority. It is also a great thing to do with your group. Use the following notes section to write down key points that stick out to you from each weekend's sermon. Notes are great to refer back to throughout the week so you can keep things fresh in your mind!

# Session 7:

## SPIRITUAL MAXIMS *(continued)*

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**PRE-READING:** Spiritual Maxim Four: The Union of the Soul with God (pages 80-82)

### OPENING PRAYER

Take a few minutes to open your group meeting in prayer. Ask God to join you and thank him for guiding your discussion. Praise him as he reveals his truth to you.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. *Received union is one that God gives you entirely on his own.*

Genesis 1

Romans 8:1-4

- Why does God give us gifts?
- We have all had one-sided relationships in our lives. How does it feel when you are the one who wants the relationship? When you don't want the relationship?

2. *Practical union happens when you are united with God by actively obeying him in outward work.*

Exodus 19-20

Romans 8:5-8

- How do you feel with friends who let you down, who say they will and want to do something for you but in the end it doesn't get done?
- Do you become disobedient to God when things get hard or when it seems he has not heard your concerns and prayers? Why? Why not?

3. *Active union with God is the most complete type, and because it's supernatural, it's also the most powerful.*

Romans 8:9-30

- Brother Lawrence's description leads us to immediately think of mountaintop experiences. What are some mountaintop experiences you have had in the presence of God?
- Brother Lawrence more importantly states it's not just an emotion – it's an "I-don't-know-what" of the soul that is beautiful, peaceful, unworldly, respectful, humble, loving and simple. Can you describe how your soul unites with God when you worship him? Work? Rest?

4. *Everyone who seeks union with God must understand that anything that distracts the will from seeking God will still be pleasing and welcome to the will because the will makes it so.*

Romans 8:31-39

1 Corinthians 13:1-7

- Remember Brother Lawrence was not expecting his maxims to be published, and this concept seems very confusing until you get into his explanation. How does 1 Corinthians 13:7 help us understand what Brother Lawrence is telling us?
- How does our earthly love of family help or hinder our understanding of how God loves and wants us to love him?

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

- What is holding you back from having an ongoing, permanent union soul to soul with God?
- Brother Lawrence spent some time explaining how God wants us to retreat and worship in Spiritual Maxim Two. Have you found a few minutes in your days to experience the peace of his holy presence? Why would Brother Lawrence consider this a need as many of us would think he had a lot more of these opportunities than we do?
- Think about how beautiful this experience is. Why do you or don't you desire it? Are you waiting to have more time, a perfect time or better circumstances? The wonder is he wants you now, just the way you are.

**NOTES:**

[illegible]



**NOTES:**

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal grey ruling lines. At the bottom right, there is a title in black serif font. The title reads "PRACTICING" followed by "the" in italics, then "PRESENCE" which is underlined, followed by "of" in italics, and finally "GOD".

# PRAYER JOURNALING

Journaling is a wonderful way to talk to God. We invite you to use the following pages during your prayer time as you read through Practicing the Presence of God with your group.

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Today I read** \_\_\_\_\_ **chapter(s)**

**Takeaways as I read...**

\_\_\_\_\_ *How I can apply this to my life...* \_\_\_\_\_



**Dear God,**

*Teach me...*

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*You are...*

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*I confess...*

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*I'm thankful for...*

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**Specific Prayer Requests:**

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**Amen.**

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# Session 8:

## SPIRITUAL MAXIMS *(continued)*

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**PRE-READING:** Spiritual Maxim Five: Being in the Presence of God (pages 83-85)  
Spiritual Maxim Six: Entering the Presence of God (pages 86-88)  
Spiritual Maxim Seven: Practicing the Presence of God (pages 89-91)

**OPENING PRAYER**

Take a few minutes to open your group meeting in prayer. Ask God to join you and thank him for guiding your discussion. Praise him as he reveals his truth to you.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

This week looks different, not only in pre-work but also in discussion. You may find you want to continue through the end of the book over a couple of weeks. It's important to not rush through this but take the time the Holy Spirit is nudging you to take.

1. Read Maxim Five together out loud completely two times. The second time, take each thought or method and open it up for discussion or questions. The Spirit comes to each of us based on our desires and needs. You may not be ready to share, and that is OK! As Brother Lawrence states multiple times, God wants a relationship that is intimate and deep. Take the time to allow everyone to share.
2. Read Maxim 6 and repeat.
3. Read Maxim 7 and repeat.

Lift your voices in worship, prayer and praise. Make it a habit at first until you experience the natural rhythm of God. Define a time you will begin meeting God alone regularly. God already has your head, heart and hand in his; grasp onto him who loves you more than you could ever desire.

**NOTES:**

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PRACTICING  
*the*  
PRESENCE  
*of*  
GOD

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PRACTICING  
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**Amen.**

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