

## Weekly Newsletter: 10<sup>th</sup> September 2024

### Reflection: How to Eat Cornflakes for the Glory of God

By Joe Barnard

“Practicing the presence of God” is one of the weirder disciplines of the Christian life. Until recently, it was a term that evangelicals avoided. It smelled more of the monastery than of the mission hall. Yet, partly due to the popularity of the spiritual classic by Brother Lawrence, and partly due to more general trends of *celebrating* spiritual disciplines, the practice has become fashionable among evangelicals.

Personally, I don’t think this is a bad thing. Modern civilisation is as effective at casting a veil over the presence of God as it is at keeping the Milky Way from view. Whereas every steeple and bell-toll once reminded people of a heavenly dimension of existence, we now live in a spiritually barren terrain. With the Jews of old, we can lament, “We do not see our signs” (Ps. 74). Such an environment can have an erosive effect on faith if we are not careful. On a Tuesday afternoon, God can feel like an untethered balloon drifting above our lives, out of touch with the bills that need to be paid and the dinner that needs to be cooked.

Yet, such feelings of detachment from God are only ever an illusion. Just as the stars are there each evening, whether we take time to note them or not, so God is always there – regardless of how we feel about Him. Hudson Taylor captured this point by naming God “the One Great Circumstance”. God’s interest and involvement in our lives is not just during select hours, such as during Sunday worship or Wednesday prayer meeting. Waking or sleeping, worshipping or working, in health or in sickness, God never blinks or loses sight of us. As the Psalmist remarks, He neither slumbers nor sleeps.

There is an implication of such omnipresence for human consciousness. The ideal state of the human mind is for us to have an abiding awareness of the living presence of God. Just as we are constantly aware of our own bodies, of our own thought lives, and of the physical objects around us, at an even deeper level, God should always be *there* for us even in the moments that the mind is focused.

It is in view of such abiding consciousness of God that the discipline of “practicing the presence” finds its place in our lives. Awareness of God is a habit like any other frame of mind. We can grow more aware of Him or less aware- all depending on our repeated choices. In fact, if we persist in this discipline diligently, it’s not impossible that the line between secular and spiritual activity is altogether erased. We can find ourselves like Brother Lawrence rejoicing in the nearness of God while washing dishes or stacking chairs!

But, how does one do this? It is here that the great Charles Wesley can help us if we meditate on one of his classic hymns. Briefly, I’ll run through it, stanza-by-stanza.

The hymn begins as follows:  
Servant of all, to toil for man  
Thou didst not, Lord, refuse;  
Thy majesty did not disdain  
To be employed for us.

So much of life involves menial work. We are scrubbing floors or paying taxes. There is nothing overtly spiritual about such activities. In fact, often such activities can feel all but pointless. Yet, how amazing that Jesus was willing to “toil” for us! His life was not lived on a glamorous stage; most of it was spent among the wood shavings of a carpenter’s shop.

The hymn goes on:

Son of the carpenter, receive  
This humble work of mine;  
Worth to my meanest labour give,  
By joining it to Thine.

Several things could be said about this verse. What stands out to me is this: the great potential for our “humble work” is that it be grafted to the temple that Jesus is building. It’s incredible to think that sitting with a friend in a waiting room or listening patiently to the complaints of a neighbour could have abiding value – even eternal value. But such is the artistry of Christ. He can take the nuts and bolts of our insignificant doings and fasten them onto the great beams that support the house of the living God.

The next stanza:

End of my every action Thou,  
In all things Thee I see;  
Accept my hallowed labour now,  
I do it unto Thee.

Here we touch upon the secret of practicing the presence of God. There is an alchemy by which any human action can become gold. It happens whenever we follow the recipe of acting *in the name* of Jesus *for the glory* of Jesus. When such intent is mixed into a conversation, even a spreadsheet, the end result is precious. The secular becomes holy; toil becomes liturgy.

And next:

Thy bright example I pursue,  
To Thee in all things rise;  
And all I think or speak or do  
Is one great sacrifice.

Such is the potential of the Christian life – not just to be ceaselessly aware of God, but ceaselessly to be in the service of God. Nothing needs to be left out of the box of worship. It’s possible for each minute of our lives to be a pleasing aroma to God. Anyone looking for more purpose in life ought to contemplate this. There is a way to eat a bowl of cornflakes to the glory of God. Mix in some gratitude with the milk and the result is priestly incense.

To end:

Careless through outward cares I go,  
From all distraction free;  
My hands are but engaged below,  
My heart is still with Thee.

In this stanza we have a window into the heart of Jesus before the Father. Jesus' communion was as clear and unbroken as sunlight on a cloudless day. In the carpenter shop, on the road, or in a boat with friends, Jesus basked in the presence of God. He and the Father were one.

Is such communion possible for us? Not perfectly, but increasingly. The more we practice the presence of God in ordinary life, the more we will be able to say with sincerity to our heavenly Father, "My hands are but engaged below,/My heart is still with Thee."

## New Members Classes

In September there will be membership classes for people interested in committing themselves more formally to the mission and communal life of HEC. These classes will be run on Wednesday evenings before the prayer meeting, **starting this Wednesday**. This time will be used for a particular reason: the prayer meeting is one of the most important elements of our shared life as a church. On Wednesday nights, prospective members will be able not just to learn more about HEC, but also experience the prayer meeting itself. If anyone has questions about the new members class, please contact Joe.

## Women's Discipleship at HEC



We're looking forward to the **Ladies' Bible Studies** starting back again on **Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> September** at 10.30am in the church. Come along as we look at some of the conversations Jesus had with people in the gospels and what we can learn from them, it promises to be a great study!

We'll run for six weeks until Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> October (taking Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> October off).

In November, we are thinking about running **online Bible studies** on Tuesday evenings from 7-8pm. Please let me know if this would be something that you would be keen to take part in by completing this quick [google form](#). We're just trying to gauge interest at this stage.

Final thing, let's talk about **Ladies' Breakfasts**! We're hoping to have two over the coming months on –

- Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> November
- Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> February – Lorna Ferguson will be our speaker

Save the dates and more details will follow nearer the time! If you have any questions, please contact [Liz@holyroodevangelical.org](mailto:Liz@holyroodevangelical.org)

## Lamentations - Faith in Ruins

By Jon Gemmell



How do you feel on the darkest day in your nation's history? Your city lies in ruins, its temple desecrated, tens of thousands slaughtered, and everyone but the lowest among you exiled. Amidst this devastation, a harsh truth sinks in: you brought this upon yourselves. God had made a covenant, promising boundless blessings for obedience but warning of unimaginable horrors for disobedience. The Babylonian siege and the eventual sacking of the city are proof that you, as God's people, have failed catastrophically. As you sit in the rubble of Jerusalem, sifting through the debris, you begin to process the unthinkable and grapple with the question: where do you go from here?

Welcome to the world of Lamentations.

Over six Sunday evenings this autumn, we'll take an in-depth look at the book of Lamentations—a harrowingly beautiful collection of poems where God's people search for hope in the aftermath of everything falling apart. This book offers a powerful remedy, teaching us to grieve rightly, lament faithfully, and hope eternally. **This Sunday evening we'll be looking at Lamentations 1 together.**

## Merchant City Church Plant

By Neil Longwe

We are writing from Merchant City Church - a new church plant starting in Glasgow City Centre. [Here](#) is our first email update about the work. We would gratefully appreciate it if you were able to take time to read it or even share with others who may be interested.

If you would like to find out more and receive regular updates about the work of Merchant City Church, sign up [here](#).



## Book Group

The book group meets on **28<sup>th</sup> September** at 3.30pm and we will be reading Max Lucado's *Anxious for Nothing*, as recommended by David Nixon. For further details please speak to Anncris ([anncris@gmail.com](mailto:anncris@gmail.com))

## HEC's 10<sup>th</sup> Birthday

Holyrood Evangelical Church is 10 years old this year! To mark the occasion we're going to have a congregational lunch after the morning service on **Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> October**. Please save the date!

## A Thank You from Wycliffe for the Summer Appeal

From Jess Torbet, Supporter Care Team Leader – ‘Papa Esso from the Democratic Republic of the Congo is just embarking on his journey with God’s word, as translation workshops have started in his language. He has faced poverty and violence his whole life without the comfort and encouragement of the Scriptures. But that is changing thanks to gifts like yours - *‘I bless the Lord for this audio Bible project. Now I can listen to the work of God in my mother tongue. Where have you been all this time? I’m going to have the Bible in my mother tongue. May God bless you.’*

Your generosity is bringing joy and the blessing of the Bible to people like Papa Esso. Your gift of £6000 to Hannu and Hazel Sorsamo is making it possible for more people like him to hear God’s life transforming words and follow Jesus. Thank you!

## Whom Shall I Fear? - OMF Edinburgh Event

Every day, millions of Christians risk their lives to follow Jesus. This has been the story of the Church for 2,000 years. Remarkably it’s also a story of faith, courage and growth. Join Bruntsfield Evangelical Church on Saturday 5 October to hear the inspiring testimonies of two East Asian believers, Timothy and Micah as they lift the lid on life in the persecuted church. Doors open at 10am, stay for a bring-your-own packed lunch. For more details, go [here](#).

## Church Calendar

For your info and prayers:

- Wednesday:
  - New Members Class at 6pm in person in the church
  - Prayer Meeting in person at 7pm (and on Zoom), refreshments served from 6.45pm
- Thursday: Session meeting at 7pm in person
- Friday: Youth Games Night from 6pm-9pm. Contact [liz@holyroodevangelical.org](mailto:liz@holyroodevangelical.org) for more details.
- Sunday:
  - Morning service at 10.30am – Joe Barnard preaching (live streamed)
  - Evening service at 6pm – Jon Gemmell preaching (live streamed)
- Monday: Baby and Toddlers at 10am



[www.holyroodevangelical.org](http://www.holyroodevangelical.org)

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