

## **Experiments in Praying Without Ceasing**

### **Workshop Session Schedule (for #2 - #5)**

7:00 - 7:15 pm    Worship

7:15 - 8:00 pm    Small Groups -- Worship sharing of Homework

(Possible queries: What was your overall experience working with the homework? What resistance did you notice? What liveliness? What was fruitful? Were you able to do all the exercises? If not, what got in the way? How did the exercises and readings affect you throughout the week? What longing did the exercises and readings touch? What, if anything, did you learn from them? Share your journal reflections as led.)

8:00 - 8:05 pm    Break

8:05 - 8:30 pm    Discussion

8:30 - 8:55 pm    Talk, Q&A

8:55 - 9:00 pm    Worship/End

### **Session Topics**

#1 – Introduction to Workshop, readings, homework, etc; form small groups...

#2 – Anchoring in Love

#3 – “Watching to the Spirit”

#4 – “Attending to the little things”

#5 – “Turning all our being”

### **Requested Commitments**

1. Attend all sessions
- 2) Do the homework (exercises & reading)
- 3) Participate whole-heartedly
- 4) Be punctual

### **Homework**

Read the respective section of readings. Do the exercises for the week (see following).

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### Introductory Readings

#### **from the *New Testament***

1 Thessalonians 5:17 (NKJV)    pray without ceasing,

1 Thessalonians 5:17 (HG)    proseuchomai: G4336 adialeiptos: G89

4336. proseuchomai, pros-yoo'-khom-ahee; from G4314 and G2172; to pray to God, i.e. supplicate, worship: --pray (X earnestly, for), make prayer.

89. adialeiptos, ad-ee-al-ipe'-toce; adv. from G88; uninterruptedly, i.e. without omission (on an appropriate occasion): --without ceasing.

#### **from John Woolman's "Journal"**

Near this time, being on some outward business in which several families were concerned, and which was attended with difficulties, some things relating thereto not being clearly stated, nor rightly understood by all, there arose some heat in the minds of the parties, and one valuable friend got off his watch. I had a great regard for him, and

felt a strong inclination, after matters were settled, to speak to him concerning his conduct in that case; but being a youth, and he far advanced in age and experience, my way appeared difficult; after some days' deliberation, and inward seeking to the Lord for assistance, I was made subject, so that I expressed what lay upon me in a way which became my youth and his years; and though it was a hard task to me it was well taken, and I believe was useful to us both.

**from Isaac Pennington's "Questions and Answers Showing Man His Duty"**

Quest. What is it to fear this God?

Ans. The spirit and soul of the creature standing in awe of his nature, and waiting to be kept in due subjection thereto; this is to fear him, and this is the proper means of preserving the spirit of the creature right in its motion towards him, attendance upon him, and expectations from him.

**from Robert Barclay's "Apology", Proposition #11**

...Inward prayer is that secret turning of the mind towards God whereby, being secretly touched and awakened by the Light of Christ in the conscience, and so bowed down under the sense of its iniquities, unworthiness, and misery, it looks up to God, and joining issue with the secret shinings of the Seed of God it breathes towards him and is constantly breathing forth some secret desires and aspirations towards him. It is in this sense that we are so frequently in Scripture commanded to "pray continually" (Luke 18:1; 1 Thess. 5:17; Eph. 6:18; Luke 21:36), which cannot be understood of outward prayer, because it were impossible that men should be always upon their knees, expressing words of prayer; and this would hinder them from the exercise of those duties, no less positively commanded. Outward prayer is when as the spirit (being thus in the exercise of inward retirement, and feeling the breathing of the Spirit of God to arise powerfully in the soul) receives strength and liberty, by a superadded motion and influence of the Spirit, to bring forth either audible sighs, groans or words, and that either in public assemblies, or in private, or at meat, &c.

As then inward prayer is necessary at all times, so, so long as the day of every man's visitation lasteth, he never wants [lacks] some influence, less or more, for the practice of it. Because he no sooner retires his mind and considers himself in God's presence but he finds himself in the practice of it.

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HOMEWORK FOR WEEK FOLLOWING SESSION #1  
(To be done before session #2-- "**Anchoring in Love**")

**Once a Day Exercises for week following Session #1**

Exercise #1 (15 mins) -- Settle your mind and body into a comfortable, relaxed state.

Who or what is God for you? Imagining God, what do you imagine? Release the questions. Settle; pray; release. Repeat at comfortable pace as time allows. Ending: express gratitude for what you have learned.

Exercise #2 (15 mins) -- Settle your mind and body into a comfortable, relaxed state.

Where do you allow God in your life? Where exclude; what hide? Release the

questions. Settle; pray; release. Repeat at comfortable pace as time allows. Ending: express gratitude for what you have learned.

Exercise #3 (15 mins) -- Settle your mind and body into a comfortable, relaxed state. What are you responsible for in your life? What is God responsible for? Release the questions. Settle; pray; release. Repeat at comfortable pace as time allows. Ending: express gratitude for what you have learned.

Exercise #4 (15 mins) -- Settle your mind and body into a comfortable, relaxed state. What resentments, confusions, doubts, etc, do you have with respect to God? Release the questions. Settle; pray; release. Repeat at comfortable pace as time allows. Ending: express gratitude for what you have learned.

Exercise #5 -- Settle ... relaxed state. Open your heart and mind to what arises. Settle. Repeat as time allows. Ending: express gratitude...

**Throughout Your Day Exercise for "Anchoring in Love" (to be practiced five days this week)**

Direct your mind and heart to notice (or imagine) God's delight in each moment of this day, in each breath, in each thing you encounter no matter how small or mundane, no matter how large or menacing... Include yourself as receiving this delight...

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**Readings for week following session #1**

**from Robert Barclay's "Apology" (proposition #15)**

\*§IX\*. Obj. But they object, that men's spirits could not subsist, if they were always intent upon serious and spiritual matters, and that therefore there is need of some divertisement to recreate the mind a little, whereby it, being refreshed, is able, with greater vigor to apply itself to these things.

Answ. I answer, though all this were granted, it would no ways militate against us, neither plead the use of these things, which we would have wholly laid aside. For that men should be always in the same intentiveness of mind we do not plead, knowing how impossible it is, so long as we are clothed with this tabernacle of clay.

But this will not allow us at any time so to recede from the memory of God and of our souls' chief concern, as not still to retain a certain sense of his fear; which cannot be so much as rationally supposed to be in the use of these things which we condemn. Now the necessary occasions, which all are involved into, in order to the care and sustentation of the outward man, are a relaxation of the mind from the more serious duties; and those are performed in the blessing, as the mind is so leavened with the love of God and the sense of his presence, that even in doing these things, the soul carrieth with it that divine influence and spiritual habit, whereby, though these acts, as of eating, drinking, sleeping, working, be, upon the matter, one with what the wicked do, yet they are done in another spirit, and in doing of them, we please the Lord, serve him, and answer our end in the creation, and so feel, and are sensible of his blessing. Whereas the wicked and profane, being not come to this place, are, in whatsoever they do, cursed; and their

“ploughing, as well as praying, is sin”!

Now, if any will plead that for relaxation of mind, there may be a liberty allowed beyond these things which are of absolute need to the sustenance of the outward man; I shall not much contend against it, provided these things be not such as are wholly superfluous, or in their proper nature and tendency lead the mind into lust, vanity, and wantonness, as being chiefly contrived and framed for that end, or generally experienced to produce these effects, or being the common engines of such as are so minded to feed one another therein, and to propagate their wickedness, to the impoisoning of others; seeing there are other innocent divertisements, which may sufficiently serve for relaxation to the mind, such as for friends to visit one another, to hear or read history, to speak soberly of the present or past transactions, to follow after gardening, to use geometrical and mathematical experiments, and such other things of this nature[.

I]n all which things we are not so to forget God (in whom we both live and are moved, Acts 17:28) as not to have always some secret reserve to him, and sense of his fear and presence, which also frequently exerts itself in the midst of these things, by some short aspiration and breathings, and that this may neither seem strange nor troublesome, I shall clear it by one manifest instance, answerable to the experience of all men: it will not be denied but that men ought to be more in the love of God, than of any other thing; for we ought to love God above all things. Now it is plain that men that are taken with love, whether it be of a woman, or of any other thing, if it hath taken a deep place in the heart, and possess the mind, it will be hard for the man, so in love, to drive out of his mind the person or thing so loved, yea in his eating, drinking, and sleeping his mind will always have a tendency that way, and, in business or recreations, however intent he be in it, there will but a very short time be permitted to pass, but the mind will let some ejaculation forth towards its beloved.

And, albeit such a one must be conversant in those things that the care of this body and suchlike things call for, yet will he avoid, as death itself, to do those things that may offend the party so beloved, or cross his design in obtaining the thing so earnestly desired; though there may be some small use in them, the great design which is chiefly in his eye, will so balance him, that he will easily look over & dispense with such petty necessities, rather than endanger the loss of the greater by them. Now that men ought to be thus in love with God and the life to come, none will deny, and the thing is apparent from these Scriptures: Matt. 6:20, “But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven”; Col. 3:2, “Set your affection on things above,” &c. And that this hath been the experience and attainment of some, the Scripture also declares (Ps. 63:1; 84:2; 2 Cor. 5:14).

**from Hafiz, “The Gift” (tr Ladinsky)**

I WANT BOTH OF US  
I want both of us  
To start talking about the great love  
As if you, and I, and the Sun were all married  
And living in a tiny room,  
Helping each other to cook,  
Do the wash,  
Weave and sew,  
Care for our beautiful  
Animals.

We all leave each morning  
To labor on the earth's field.  
No one does not lift a great pack.  
I want both of us to start singing like two  
Traveling minstrels  
About this extraordinary existence  
We share,  
As if  
You, I, and God were all married  
And living in  
A tiny  
Room.

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HOMework FOR WEEK FOLLOWING SESSION #2  
(To be done before session #3 -- "Watching to the Spirit")

**Throughout Your Day Exercise for week following session #2**

Direct your mind and heart to "attending and waiting upon the Lord in the workings of his holy power in [your] heart ... wherever [you are], or whatever [you have] to do", keeping your heart "near the power", "...tender, soft, and living". Pay special attention to decision points during your day.

**At the end of Your Day:** Spend 5 – 10 minutes recording your experience in a journal.

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**Readings for week following session #2**

**from Isaac Penington's "The Consideration of a Position Concerning the Book of Common Prayer"**

Now the breathing of this child to the Father from the sense <106> of these wants [lacks] for his supply; that is prayer; nay, though it be but a groan, or sigh, which cannot be uttered, or expressed; yet that is prayer, true prayer, which hath an acceptance with the Lord, and receiveth a gracious answer from him. And he that begetteth the child, teacheth him to pray, even by the same Spirit which begat him. In watching daily to the Spirit, the child is kept sensible of the will of the Father, and in his light he sees the way wherein he is to walk; he sees also the enemy when he is coming, yea, and the snares he is privily laying, and he feels his own weakness to withstand or escape: and in this sense his heart cries to the Father of spirits for preservation; for him to stand by him; for him to step in in the needful time, even in the season of distress. And thus watching to the Spirit, the life of a Christian is a continual course of prayer: he prays continually. This is the living prayer of the living child, which consists not in a form of words, either read out of a book, or conceived in the mind; but in feeling the breath of its nature issuing out from the principle of life in it to the living spring, which is the Father of it; who by causing his virtues to spring up in it, nourisheth it to everlasting life.

### **from John Burnyeat's *Journal***

I continued, as I have said before, for these four years, mostly following my outward calling, and attending and waiting upon the Lord in the workings of his holy power in my heart, both in meetings and at other times, wherever I was, or whatever I had to do; for I found, that as my heart was kept near the power, it kept me tender, soft, and living; and besides I found, as I was diligent in eyeing of it, there was a constant sweet stream, that ran softly in my soul, of divine peace, pleasure, and joy, which far exceeded all other delights and satisfactions; and this became the great engager of my soul to watch with such diligence, for I found the love of God to constrain.

And furthermore, I observed, that if I neglected it, or let my mind out after anything else more than I ought, and so forgot this, I began to be like a stranger; and I saw that I soon might lose my interest in these riches, and treasure, and the true common-wealth of God's spiritual Israel, which Christ had purchased for me, and given me the earnest of to inherit. Thus being mindful of the opening wisdom of God, which was from above, and heavenly, and not from below, earthly, I was preserved, and helped, and succoured in the needful time. And because of the blessings and rich mercies of the Lord which my soul enjoyed, I was willing to serve him in what I might; and willingly received upon me a share of that concern which became proper for me, with others, to take upon us in the church; that I might be helpful in all necessary things.

### **From Philadelphia YM "Discipline" (1759)**

#### **DAYS AND TIMES**

*Some reasons for not observing fasts and feast days and times, and other human injunctions and institutions relative to the worship of God.*

Ever since we were a people we have had a testimony against formal worship, being convinced by the precepts of our Lord Jesus Christ, the testimonies of his apostles, and our own experience, that the worship and prayers which God accepts, are such only as are produced by the influence and assistance of his holy Spirit; we cannot therefore consistently unite with any in the observation of public fasts, feasts, and what they term holy days; or such injunctions and forms as are devised in man's will for divine worship; the dispensation to which outward observations were peculiar, having long since given place to the spiritual dispensation of the gospel, we believe the fast we are now called to is not the bowing of the head like a bulrush for a day, but an universal and continual fasting and refraining from every thing which has a tendency to defile the soul and unfit it for becoming the temple of the Holy Ghost, according to the injunctions of Christ to his primitive disciples, "If any man will come after me, let him take up his daily cross and follow me. Watch ye therefore and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." That the primitive believers saw an end to these shadows of good things, by coming to Him in whom all figures and shadows end, is evident by the words of the apostle Paul; "For Christ, said he, is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth," Rom. 10:4. -- "But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises." Heb. 8:6. "Let no man therefore judge you in meat or drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days, which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ." Col. 2:16-17. And the same apostle thus expostulated with some who it appears had fallen from the true faith in these respects, "But now after that ye have known God, how turn ye again to the beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again

to be in bondage. Ye observe days and months, and times, and years: I am afraid of you lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain" Gal. 4:9-11.

**from William Penn, from "No Cross, No Crown"**

5. But in the next place, how and in what manner is the cross to be daily borne?

The way, like the cross, is spiritual: that is, an inward submission of the soul to the will of God, as it is manifested by the light of Christ in the consciences of men, though it be contrary to their own inclinations. For example: when evil presents, that which shows the evil does also tell them they should not yield to it; and if they close with its counsel, it gives them power to escape it. But they that look and gaze upon the temptation, at last fall in with it, and are overcome by it; the consequence of which is guilt and judgment. Therefore, as the Cross of Christ is that spirit and power in men, though not of men, but of God, which crosseth and reproveth their fleshly lusts and affections; so the way of taking up the cross is an entire resignation of soul to the discoveries and requireing of it: not to consult their worldly pleasure, or carnal ease, or interest, for such are captivated in a moment, but continually to watch against the very appearances of evil, and by the obedience of faith, that is, of true love to, and confidence in God, cheerfully to offer up to the death of the cross, that evil part, that Judas in themselves, which, not enduring the heat of the siege, and being impatient in the hour of temptation, would by its near relation to the tempter, more easily betray their souls into his hands.

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**HOMEWORK FOR WEEK FOLLOWING SESSION #3**  
(To be done before session #4 -- "**Attending to the little things**")

**Throughout Your Day Exercise for week following session #3**

Direct your mind and heart to "the little weak stirrings of life in the heart." Notice especially moments when you feel overwhelmed, weak, powerless, etc.

**At the end of Your Day:** Spend 5 – 10 minutes recording your experience in a journal.

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**Readings for week following session #3**

**From Penington's "To All Such as Complain That They Want Power", Works (Vol 2)**

...I confess the power doth not so flow forth to man, as man expects it; but the power of life works man out of death in a mystery, and begins in him as weakness. There is all the strength, all the power of the enemy, against the work of God in the heart. There is but a little thing (like a grain of mustard-seed), a weak thing, a foolish thing, even that which is not (to man's eye), to overcome all this; and yet in this is the power. <289> And here is the great deceit of man; he looks for a great, manifest power in or upon him to begin with, and doth not see how the power is in the little weak stirrings of life in the heart, in the rising up of somewhat against the mighty strength of corruption in him; which he returning towards, cleaving to, and waiting upon the Lord in, the strength of the Lord will be made manifest in its season, and he will be drawn nearer and nearer to the Lord, and

his enemies be overcome and fall he knows not how. But he that waits for such a mighty appearance of power at first, looking so to begin, and after that manner to be preserved and carried on, can never in this capacity so much as walk in the path eternal: nor is not in the way of receiving the power, which springs up as weakness, and leads on and overcomes enemies in a mysterious way of working, and not in such a manifest and direct way of conquest, as man's wisdom expects.

The seed of the kingdom is sown man knows not how, even by a sound of the eternal Spirit, which he is not a fit judge of; and it grows up he knows not how; and the power appears and works in it, in a way that he is not aware of. He looks for the kingdom, the power, and the life, in a way of his observation, answerable to the thoughts and expectations of his heart. But thus it never comes; but in the way of its own eternal motion, it springs in the hearts of many, and they overlook the thing, and turn from it daily, not knowing its proper way of appearance, but expecting it some other way. And thus the enemy holds them in the bands of death, and they are captives in the strange land, refusing the Prince of life, in his daily offers of life, because they look not for him thus, but after another way and manner. And till this eye of observation be put out in them, they can never clearly see the appearance of the Saviour to them, nor feel the efficacy of his saving of them from that, from which none but he can deliver.

...Whoever have been high, and are still waiting and expecting in the heights of their own wisdom and observations concerning the kingdom, let them take heed of despising the day of small things, and know that their proper beginning (yea the very path of eternal life itself) lies in the lowness, in the humility, even in that nothingness which bows before the least light of the day, and with gladness of heart enters into, and walks in it. For this I <297> certainly know; the wise, the observing eye, the vast comprehending heart, which waits for such an extraordinary power, judging it cannot begin following the light, which daily appears to check and reprove, without some great manifest appearance of power; this cannot see the low little path of life, which is proper for it to walk in, and to the end whereof it must travel, if ever it come to sit down in the kingdom, or to inherit the power of the endless life. Precious is the dispensation of this age, great is the power and glory which is arising; but the wise and knowing of this age are shut out of it, as they have been out of the life and truth of the dispensations of God in all ages. Happy is he who is not above that, wherewith God visiteth his soul to redeem it.

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#### HOMework FOR WEEK FOLLOWING SESSION #4 (To be done before session #5 -- "Turning all our being")

##### **Throughout Your Day Exercise for week following session #4**

"Begin now, as you read these words, as you sit in your chair, to offer your whole selves, utterly and in joyful abandon, in quiet, glad surrender to Him who is within. In secret ejaculations of praise, turn in humble wonder to the Light, faint though it may be. Keep contact with the outward world of sense and meanings. Here is no discipline in absent-mindedness. Walk and talk and work and laugh with your friends. But behind the scenes, keep up the life of simple prayer and inward worship. Keep it up throughout the day. Let inward prayer be your last act before you fall asleep and the first act when you awake."

**At the end of Your Day:** Spend 5 – 10 minutes recording your experience in a journal.

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**Readings for week following session #4**

**from Thomas Kelly's "A Testament of Devotion"**

*from "The Light Within (II)"*

There is a way of ordering our mental life on more than one level at once. On one level we may be thinking, discussing, seeing, calculating, meeting all the demands of external affairs. But deep within, behind the scenes, at a profounder level, we may also be in prayer and adoration, song and worship and a gentle receptiveness to divine breathings.

The secular world of today values and cultivates only the first level, assured that *there* is where the real business of mankind is done, and scorns, or smiles in tolerant amusement, at the cultivation of the second level – a luxury enterprise, a vestige of superstition, an occupation for special temperaments. But in a deeply religious culture men know that the deep level of prayer and of divine attendance is the most important thing in the world. It is at this deep level that the real business of life is determined. The secular mind is an abbreviated, fragmentary mind, building only upon a part of man's nature and neglecting a part – the most glorious part – of man's nature, powers and resources. The religious mind involves the whole of man, embraces his relations with time within their true ground and setting in the Eternal Lover. It ever keeps close to the fountains of divine creativity. In lowliness it knows joys and stabilities, peace and assurances, that are utterly incomprehensible to the secular mind. It lives in resources and powers that make individuals radiant and triumphant, groups tolerant and bonded together in mutual concern, and is bestirred to an outward life of unremitting labor. (...)

How, then shall we lay hold of that Life and Power, and live the life of prayer without ceasing? By quiet, persistent practice in turning of all our being, day and night, in prayer and inward worship and surrender, toward Him who calls in the deeps of our souls. Mental habits of inward orientation must be established. An inner, secret turning to God can be made fairly steady, after weeks of months and years of practice and lapses and failures and returns. It is as simple an art as Brother Lawrence found it, but it may be long before we achieve any steadiness in the process. Begin now, as you read these words, as you sit in your chair, to offer your whole selves, utterly and in joyful abandon, in quiet, glad surrender to Him who is within. In secret ejaculations of praise, turn in humble wonder to the Light, faint though it may be. Keep contact with the outward world of sense and meanings. Here is no discipline in absent-mindedness. Walk and talk and work and laugh with your friends. But behind the scenes, keep up the life of simple prayer and inward worship. Keep it up throughout the day. Let inward prayer be your last act before you fall asleep and the first act when you awake. And in time you will find as did Brother Lawrence, that "those who have the gale of the Holy Spirit go forward even in sleep."

The first days and weeks and months are awkward and painful, but enormously rewarding. Awkward, because it takes constant vigilance and effort and reassertions of the will, at the first level. Painful, because our lapses are so frequent, the intervals when we forget Him so long. Rewarding, because we have begun to live. But these weeks and months and perhaps even years must be passed though before He gives us greater and

easier stayedness upon Himself.

Lapses and forgettings are so frequent. Our surroundings grow so exciting. Our occupations are to so exciting. But when you catch yourself again, lose no time in self-recriminations, but breathe a silent prayer for forgiveness and begin again, just where you are. Offer *this* broken worship to Him and say: "This is what I am except Thou aid me." Admit no discouragement, but ever return quietly to Him and wait in His Presence.

At first the practice of inward prayer is a process of alternation of attention between outer things and the Inner Light. Preoccupations with either brings the loss of the other. Yet what is sought is not alternation, but simultaneity, worship undergirding every moment, living prayer, the continuous current and background of all moments of life. Long practice indeed is needed before alternation yields to concurrent immersion in both levels at once. (...)

The first signs of simultaneity are given when at the moment of recovery from a period of forgetting there is a certain sense that we have not completely forgotten Him. It is as though we are only coming back into a state of vividness which had endured in dim and tenuous form throughout.