



# The Plain Between the Hills

...That in order to form a habit of conversing with God continually, and referring all we do to Him; we must at first apply to Him with some diligence: but that after a little care we should find His love inwardly excite us to it without any difficulty.

Brother Lawrence

LET'S BE CLEAR: THERE ARE CERTAINLY DIFFERENT KINDS OF COMMUNICATION WITH GOD, and no one kind should permanently replace another. Because our God loves order, there will always be the need for carefully ordered, systematic praise; because we are called to draw together with the body of Christ, there will always be the time and place for corporate praise in fellowship with like believers.

This habit of *continual* praise is not intended to replace any other style or type, but is meant to be, as it were, the bonding glue that holds them all together. It is the rolling green plain of ordinary living that connects together the rising mountain peaks of more structured, corporate praise of God.



As a stage director, I would always instruct my actors to work on their roles privately,

between formal rehearsals. Preparation for performance could never consist entirely of the weekly rehearsal, in which all the actors came together to work, but every public rehearsal must be grounded in the work they had each done at home since the last.

This is not to suggest that our private praise is always arduous, meticulous rehearsal for the more corporate form; we are not performing for the crowd, but practicing the embrace of the Father. The director—be it dramatic or musical—knows that without the daily, private practice of those in his or her charge, half of each formal rehearsal will be wasted just catching up to the point where real progress can be made. And without our private communion during the week, part of our corporate praise on Sunday will be wasted just getting back into the rhythm of the form. After spending all week with the Father, however, He'll not be an unfamiliar embrace come Sunday.



To the one unaccustomed to this habit of continual praise, the process may at first seem contrived, even mechanical or insincere. Habits (especially good habits) are formed intentionally, not by accident. It may at first seem as if process is overpowering purpose, but in time purpose will become automatic, and process forgotten.

In one of the more ridiculous scenes from the forgettable 1969 film of the musical *Paint Your Wagon*, Clint Eastwood (of all people) meanders through the forest singing "I talk to the trees / But they don't listen to me." This may be the image conjured up by those new to the idea of a habitual, almost constant communion with God, and they may be inhibited by the fear of being caught by others "talking to the trees."

Canon Holmes of India told of seeing Hindu worshipers tapping on trees and stones and whispering "Are you there?" to the god they hoped might reside within. In complete humility the instructed Christian brings the answer to that question. God is indeed there. He is there as He is here and everywhere, not confined to tree or stone, but free in the universe, near to everything, next to everyone, and through Jesus Christ immediately accessible to every loving heart.

A. W. Tozer



Our communion with the Father need not be audible, but it can be. It need not be eloquent, but it can be. It is personal, after all, and each child must discover his or her own best way of communing with the Father.

The Lord searches out the heart looking for authenticity, not professionalism. He responds best to honesty and sincerity, not necessarily a well-polished delivery. A finely crafted, twenty-minute soliloquy may contain nothing more than the tiniest germ of authentic discourse, while something as small as an honest sigh may speak volumes of adoration, confession, and repentance.

Incline Your ear, O Lord, and answer me;  
For I am afflicted and needy.  
Preserve my soul, for I am a godly man;  
O You my God, save Your servant who trusts in You.  
Be gracious to me, O Lord,  
For to You I cry all day long.  
Make glad the soul of Your servant,  
For to You, O Lord, I lift up my soul.  
For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive,  
And abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon You.  
Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer;  
And give heed to the voice of my supplications!  
In the day of my trouble I shall call upon You,  
For You will answer me.  
There is no one like You among the gods, O Lord,  
Nor are there any works like Yours.  
All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord,  
And they shall glorify Your name.  
For You are great and do wondrous deeds;  
You alone are God.  
Teach me Your way, O Lord;  
I will walk in Your truth;  
Unite my heart to fear Your name.  
I will give thanks to You, O Lord my God,  
with all my heart,  
And will glorify Your name forever.

Psalms 86:1-12

I need Thee every hour, most gracious Lord;  
No tender voice like Thine, can peace afford.

I need Thee every hour, stay Thou near by;  
Temptations lose their power when Thou art nigh.

I need Thee every hour, in joy or pain;  
Come quickly and abide, or life is vain.

I need Thee every hour, most Holy One;  
O make me Thine indeed, Thou blessed Son!

I need Thee, O I need Thee; every hour I need Thee;  
O bless me now, my Saviour, I come to Thee!

Annie S. Hawks

