

# Reflections by the Pond

THE WRITINGS OF DAVID S LAMPEL



# Climbing Higher

*Fill all my vision, Saviour, I pray,  
Let me see only Jesus today;  
Though thro' the valley Thou ledest me,  
Thy fadeless glory encompasseth me.*

*Fill all my vision, every desire  
Keep for Thy glory; my soul inspire  
With Thy perfection, Thy holy love flooding  
My pathway with light from above.*

*Fill all my vision, let naught of sin  
Shadow the brightness shining within.  
Let me see only Thy blessed face,  
Feasting my soul on Thy infinite grace.*

*Fill all my vision, Saviour divine,  
Till with Thy glory my spirit shall shine.  
Fill all my vision, that all may see  
Thy holy Image reflected in me.*

Avis B. Christiansen

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# progress

One of the pleasures of Christmas, and the winter holiday season in general, is the receiving of correspondence from people whose pens have been silent the rest of the year. And most pleasurable of all are the family photographs very often tucked inside.

Admittedly, just what this custom has to do with the celebration of the Incarnation escapes me, but it is a not disagreeable tradition that has its practical benefits as well.

“Would you just look at that! Uncle Harlan’s wearing a toupee now!”

“My, my, Betty’s put on some weight this year.”

“Well, *they’re* getting grayer.”

“That vacation must have set them back a pretty penny.”

“Where *did* she get that hideous outfit?”

By far, however, the most pleasant use of the tradition is to chronicle the steady progress of family life. Most holiday pictures are peopled by children, and for friends and family far away, the snapshot tucked inside the Christmas card is sometimes the only means by which we can observe their transition from one milestone to the next.

“Isn’t she darling. And doesn’t she look just like her mother?”

“He’s growing into quite a little man.”

“Doesn’t he get haircuts anymore?”

“So *that’s* her new boyfriend. Isn’t he a skinny thing.”

“Isn’t he handsome in his cap and gown. My, where has the time gone.”

“Have you ever in your life seen a more beautiful bride?”

Until one day the one who was the child becomes the parent. And thus the circle comes ’round again.

“Isn’t she darling. And doesn’t she look just like her mother?”



There is really nothing special about the transition from one year to the next. There’s really nothing magical about the stroke of midnight on December 31; it is just one more page turned on the calendar. But the inception of the new year is as good a time as any to take stock of our progress. Just as children inevitably grow up and older, maturing from child to adult, so too should we be maturing in our relationship with Christ.

Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.

*Colossians 2:6-7*

Are you growing? Are you maturing? Are you becoming an “adult” Christian? Or has your life become subdivided: equal parts secular and religious—with most of the religious part consisting of committee meetings?

The goal of every believer should be to so integrate Christ into his or her life that there is no longer any line of demarcation. God is not to be an appendage; He is to be our all. God is not a trophy to be won, then placed into a glass case, but a living, breathing Spirit who has Lordship over every part of our lives.



# the muck of the slough

Everything is appropriate in its own time. But though God has planted eternity in the hearts of men, even so, many cannot see the whole scope of God's work from beginning to end.

*Ecclesiastes 3:11, The Living Bible*

It is like walking along the mud flats in the bottom of a slough. The muck beneath your bare feet sucks at every step, slowing your stride. The cold slime oozes between your toes, with each labored step pulling you down, pulling you down.

Something deep within you cries out, desperate, convinced of the grasping notion that there is surely something better. Every morning you swing your weary bones out of bed, plant your feet down onto what you hope will be gossamer clouds of ease—only to discover that nothing has changed from the day before, and your feet sink down into the familiar brown muck.

You want to cry out, "I deserve better than this!" but don't like the presumptuous sound of it. What you mean is that you were made for something better—that you are cut from better cloth than this. You acknowledge the Creator, and because He made you in His image, there is something profound and mysterious dwelling—simmering, percolating—within: a sense of your part in God's grand scheme of man's eternity. Your part is small, admittedly, but not insignificant. He has placed within you a desire for Him and His ways; He has, through the sacrifice of His own Son, graciously given you a place with full rights in His own family.

You have enjoyed moments of sweet, intimate communion. You have, like sister Mary, sat enraptured at His feet, listening, letting His words and love seep into your very pores. Every part of you embraced the Lord and, secure in His elevating love, you left His presence driven not by mechanical locomotion, but by the sheer power of His life. Your feet never touched the ground as you returned to live for Him, by Him, to Him.

But soon you found yourself, once again, treading not just upon the soil of earth, but down deep in its muck.



It is not inevitable, but it is persistent. Man may have been created with a heart yearning for God, but he was also created with feet of clay. Indeed, that paradox is the source of the believer's pain. Having been granted a glimpse into the ethereal "lightness of being" of eternity with the Savior, our leaden steps in the muck of this world have become all the more disconcerting.

We know better.

We have lived better.

"Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering."

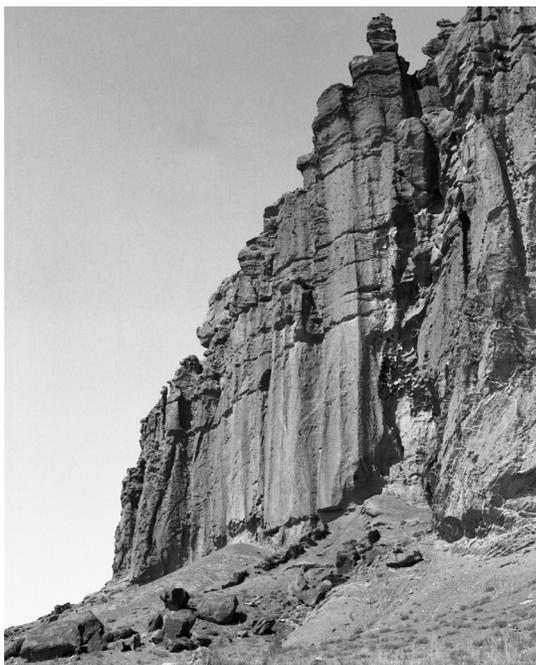
*Matthew 5:23-24*

If Jesus' words are sound counsel when we have wronged a brother—and they are—then how much more pertinent they are when we have wronged Christ Himself. We are not to track the world's muck into our worship.

The life of a Christian is to be, by definition, Christ-centered. To avoid the path that takes us through the muck of the slough we are to keep our eyes—even while we still float in His heavenly realms—on the Lord. The sobering sight of His empty, but blood-splattered cross is the caressing breeze that keeps us aloft. And if our gaze roams—if from the heights we begin to envy those who trudge the earthen path—and our feet sink into the sucking slough, then, on our way to the throne, we are to revisit the place of His sacrifice. For only there, in that awful, holy place, do we find the cleansing, restoring waters that will clean our feet of the world's mud, and lift us once again onto the Father's glorious, immaculate plane.

A soul can never attain the knowledge of God unless God Himself in His condescension takes hold of it and raises it up to Himself. For the human intellect lacks the power to ascend and to participate in divine illumination, unless God Himself draws it up—in so far as this is possible for the human intellect—and illumines it with rays of divine light.

*The Philokalia*



*I thirst, Thou wounded Lamb of God,  
To wash me in Thy cleansing blood;  
To dwell within Thy wounds; then pain  
Is sweet, and life or death is gain.*

*Take my poor heart, and let it be  
Forever closed to all but Thee:  
Seal Thou my breast, and let me wear  
That pledge of love forever there.*

*How blest are they who still abide  
Close shelter'd in Thy bleeding side!  
Who thence their life and strength derive,  
And by Thee move, and in Thee live.*

*What are our works but sin and death,  
Till Thou thy quick'ning Spirit breathe?  
Thou giv'st the power thy grace to move;  
O wondrous grace! O boundless love!*

*How can it be, Thou heavenly King,  
That Thou shouldst us to glory bring;  
Make slaves the partners of thy throne,  
Deck'd with a never-fading crown?*

*Hence our hearts melt, our eyes o'erflow,  
Our words are lost, nor will we know,  
Nor will we think of aught beside—  
My Lord, my Love is crucified.*

John Wesley

# surprises on a dirt road

Life is never played out in a straight line. If one stands at Point A and makes meticulous plans for reaching Point B, there will invariably be several unexpected stopping points along the way—and sometimes Point B may never be reached at all. James, the brother of Christ, seems to say it best.

Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.

*James 4:14*

Here in the Midwest it's called the weather. About a week ago we had snow on the ground. Then it warmed up sufficiently for Linda and I to haul out the hoses and wash the Jeep. A day later, we had freezing drizzle that coated every tree and bush and driving surface with a layer of ice. Beautiful, but deadly. And through it all, the forecasters were generally incorrect about what the next day would bring.

In the story books (and our rose-tinted memories) winter is a frosted wonderland of beautiful snow. But the truth is that the season contains just about every variety of weather known to man: from shirtsleeve days to bitter, subzero cold; from brilliant sunshine to a seemingly endless procession of slate-gray days; from fresh blankets of white snow to monotonous landscapes of ugly browns and grays.

Life is not constancy, traveled on a paved freeway, but a series of surprises traveled on a muddy dirt road. The quality of our relationship with God is demonstrated every day by how we respond to the twists and turns that come our way. Life is messy for everyone, but those who have placed their trust in the Lord get the mud washed off quicker.

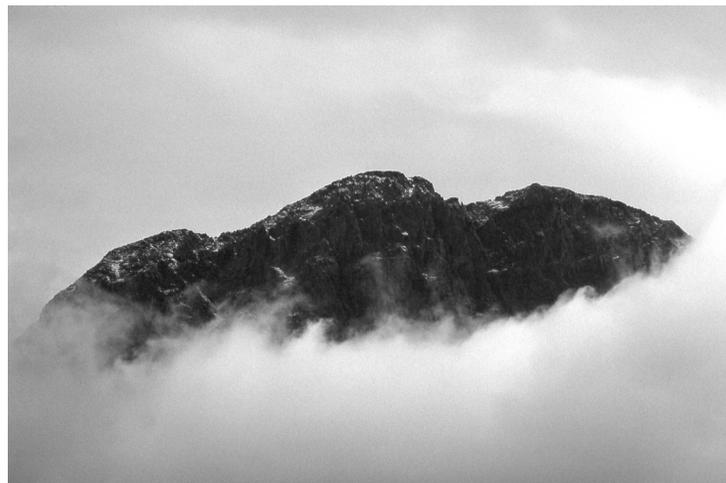
One day may find you slogging through deep slush, up to your neck in potholes and pitfalls. The next day may find you slipping and sliding across sheets of icy predicaments, never sure whether your next step might send you flat onto your back. And the next day? Who knows.

He knows. Woe to the one who slips and slides his way from one day to the next without the Lord. Woe to him who wrangles and cajoles a plastic, man-made destiny out of the ether, only to be discouraged when things don't go as planned.

There is One who never promises an easy road, but is always there to pick us up when we slip and fall. There is One who offers firm footing when the bottom drops out of our expectations. There is One who knows how to wipe off the mud without wiping away our hope.

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

*James 1:17 NKJV*



# the King of glory

There is nothing particularly momentous about the morning ablutions of the typical American male. Varying from person to person only in minor degrees and the sequence in which it proceeds, the morning routine is a *mélange* of the ordinary: put the coffee on, answer the persistent call of nature, shower, shave, brush, and dress for the day. All of it necessary. All of it utterly mundane. Day after day the routine is conducted on autopilot by someone barely awake, eyelids sufficiently tooth-picked open to ensure that one does not gargle with cologne, or brush the teeth with shaving cream. Each new day begins in a steam-shrouded blur without focused thought or creative variety. It is a path familiar and well-trod.

But at certain times of the year, just outside the bathroom window, the mystical glories of God are being played out on a grand scale. His rising ball of fire creates a radiant tapestry, painting wisps of purples and pinks across the dawn sky. The light and magical hues move from the merest hints at the horizon to eventually color all of the arcing heavens in paint strokes of majesty, and breathtaking beauty.

And if one never bothers to look away, even for a moment, from the haze of the monotonous morning routine, it is all missed.



The high-priced executive with mergers on the mind, the office assistant already looking forward to a luncheon date, the shop owner, the clerk, the mechanic in overalls, the engineer in hardhat, the homemaker preparing breakfast, the computer programmer with algorithms dancing through her head, the teacher preparing for today's pop quiz, even the slugabed still beneath the bedclothes—all will begin their day at a crossroads: Will they, with tight focus, keep their eyes on the ordinary, or will they gaze upon the glory just outside their window?

The heavens are telling of the glory of God;  
And their expanse is declaring the work of  
His hands.

Day to day pours forth speech,  
And night to night reveals knowledge.  
There is no speech, nor are there words;  
Their voice is not heard.

Their line has gone out through all the earth,  
And their utterances to the end of the world.  
In them He has placed a tent for the sun,  
Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his  
chamber;

It rejoices as a strong man to run his course.  
Its rising is from one end of the heavens,  
And its circuit to the other end of them;  
And there is nothing hidden from its heat.

*Psalm 19:1-6*

For the believer, the Lord God is sovereign. He holds in His hand the minutes and hours of each day. He commands every crisis and blessing, every event, every “happenstance.” Yet it is still left to each believer to choose the perspective with which he or she will view and meet these moments. Will they be just another part of the drudgery of life, or will they be one more rich and rewarding thread in the fabric woven from God’s loom? Though God is sovereign, He leaves it to us either to miss, or look for and receive the glory.

“For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
So are My ways higher than your ways  
And My thoughts than your thoughts.”  
*Isaiah 55:9*

We make a mistake if we do not learn to admire God in all things, great and small; for a new rich mine would be opened in our consciousness if we could learn to recognize God in nature as well as in grace! We do acknowledge that the God of nature is also the God

of grace; and it is true that we glorify God’s redeeming grace no less when we glorify His creating and sustaining power. When Christ came to redeem us, He stepped into the framework of an already existent nature. If we will obey and believe, we can go on pushing back the narrow borders of our spiritual world until it takes in the whole creation of God! At one time, the English merchant and renowned poet, William Blake, stood watching the sun come up out of the sea. The bright yellow disk of the sun emerged, gilding the water and painting the sky with a thousand colors. “Ah! I see gold!” the merchant said. Blake answered, “I see the glory of God! And I hear a multitude of the heavenly host crying, ‘The whole earth is full of His glory.’”

*A.W. Tozer*

Every morning when we rise we face a decision: Will this day be led and energized by the beauty and glory of a sovereign God? Or will this day remain leaden and short-circuited by the world in which we live? Will we be far- or near-sighted? Will our scope be expansive and visionary, or will it be small-minded and myopic?

Look out the window. Look somewhere outside of yourself. Your world is small. No matter how important you are, there is One more important. No matter how wealthy or influential you are, there is One with wealth unimaginable and influence beyond measure. No matter how beautiful you are, there is One with beauty that blinds the eye.

Look out your window. There He is! Greet the new day—and greet with unspeakable joy its glorious Creator!

Lift up your heads,  
O gates,  
And be lifted up,  
O ancient doors,  
That the King of glory may come in!

*Psalms 24:7*



# devoted

Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

*Genesis 1:3-5*

**L**ike bookends cradling the tale of a brief history, the skies herald the beginning and close of each new day. The sky-canvas paints the dawn with royal purples and deep pinks, glorious hues from a palette sent down by the Father of Lights. Then He employs the same palette to preface the night, as the sun descends on the opposite side of the sky.

In the handiwork with which He drapes our morn we meet God at the beginning of each day. And, like a returning friend who never strays far, we meet Him again at the day’s close. And all the while, in between, He asks: *What have you done with My day?*

Is the widow left alone, without her mate, without steady friend, and I’ve not spent time with her loneliness?

Has the little child gone day after day without guidance, without wisdom come down from above? Have I fed his belly without nurturing the soul?

Have I listened more to the self-centered murmurings of my own heart than the cries and pleadings of those in distress around me?

Have I given any of my time and my flesh to the one shut in with only television or radio for fellowship?

Does the brute know nothing of God—even from me?

Have I used the gifts He gave me? Have I answered His call?

Though my soul may belong to Him, does my heart? Have I handed Him the key to my life? Does He possess me, life and limb, mind and body, or have I only leased Him temporary use of the hall?

Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

*James 1:27*

*Lord God, as I rise to greet the brilliant colors of another day, may I devote all of it to You. And may I become Your instrument of mercy and grace in a world starving for the touch of Christ—person to person, flesh to flesh.*



# remembering

When I shipped overseas during the Vietnam War, my most prized possession was a pocket-sized copy of my fiancé's senior picture. Whenever the hardness of my situation would overwhelm, I would gaze upon that lovely face to be reminded not only of the one I loved, but that there was a softer world back home in the States—a world without guns, without metal walls and floors, and without the coarse behavior of sailors crammed together in the middle of the sea.

There was not a chance that while I was overseas I was going to *literally* forget my fiancé. I was not going to forget that she existed, nor was I going to forget about her. If for no other reason, my yearning for her would not let that happen. But there was a chance that circumstances would conspire to dull my connection to her.

Loneliness can play tricks on the mind. That which is within reach can start to look better than that which is even momentarily beyond our reach. A healthy young man caught in the lunacy of war a long way from home can make poor choices based on the immediate availability of something of inferior worth. A sailor on liberty in a foreign port is like a kid in a candy shop: so many sweet enticements that seem good, but will actually rot the teeth.

In that moment, the best way for me to remember that what I had back home was far superior to what was before me, was to keep looking at that picture.



Next to the front door of the small house in which I was born and raised hung an inexpensive and faded print of the Savior knocking at a closed door. It was an artist's famous and wholly inaccurate rendition of a European-looking Jesus acting out Revelation 3:20. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me." That picture hung there for all of my growing-up years.

Over those years I may have learned how to ignore the picture with my eyes, walking past it without a glance. But my mind always acknowledged its presence, for even today, many decades later, I cannot remember that front door without also seeing the picture of Jesus next to it.

There were times I went out that door to do something I shouldn't, or came in that door later than I had promised. There were times I went out it in anger. There were times I went out that door with thoughts anywhere but on Christ. But every time, there He was. I couldn't avoid Him. And even if I was off doing something I shouldn't (as is the natural proclivity of teenagers), always in the back of my consciousness was the image of a patient, gracious Jesus seeking communion with my heart. He was already my Savior; that picture was a daily reminder that He desired also to be my Lord.



The spirit may be willing, and have only the best of intentions, but the flesh is weak. Because we can forget, we need reminders.

Chances are very good that the Christian will not literally forget, or forget about Jesus. Even if the feeble gray cells of the human brain should fail, the believer always retains the persistent Spirit—that gracious Nagger. He is the permanent brand that marks each believer as belonging to Christ, and forever links our spirit to His.

But just as the war-lonely sailor can find solace in the arms of an inferior substitute for the sweetheart left behind, the Christian can gravitate toward more familiar and immediate temporal comforts, thus blunting the connecting work of the Spirit. After all, we are still people made of flesh, for whom "seeing is believing," and

to those of us treading this muddy plane God the Father, Son and Spirit are still invisible. We are made of stuff that responds best to that which connects with our senses: hearing, smelling, taste, sight, and touch. Spiritually, we all hail from Missouri, the “Show-Me” state; that which we see with our own eyes, can hold in our own hands, or hear with our own ears carries greater weight than that which is imagined, or even believed. Faith is strong, but in the flesh-born believer it is an uphill climb for it to compete with whatever is here before our eyes, and within our grasp.

*O soul, are you weary and troubled?  
No light in the darkness you see?  
There's light for a look at the Savior,  
And life more abundant and free!  
Turn your eyes upon Jesus,  
Look full in His wonderful face;  
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim  
In the light of His glory and grace.*

Helen H. Lemmel



Then, after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers.

*Luke 2:46-47*

Hanging on the wall near my desk is a print of a famous illustration of the young Jesus with the teachers in the temple. The original has been cropped to reduce out every other person except Christ. This framed print hung on the wall of my childhood bedroom, and remains with me



even now. The image reminds me that my Lord was “born” here on earth, and went through the same growing up process as I. In the face of the youth, however, the artist has captured that mysterious conjoining of flesh and deity: the expression is at once that of a boy wishing to go outside to play ball with his chums, and a beatific reverence for the law His Father had given His people. The old image emphasizes my kinship with Jesus: still flesh, yet, through Him, justified. It makes me love Him all the more.



We may love Jesus Christ, but our attentions can easily be distracted from Him. In a time of cell phones and cable TV and computers, the things of Christ can seem rather organically quaint. Today life is made of chromium and plastic; it moves forward at a blinding pace, and few people choose to slow down long enough to remember and contemplate someone who walked the earth two millennia ago. It is history, it is religion—neither of which excite the modern mind.

Yet the modern believer owes everything he is and has to this one who graciously taps at the door, waiting for an invitation inside for sweet communion. It is an insult of the lowest order to forget about Him. *Blessed Lord, forgive us our ennui, our lazy transgressions against Your Spirit, Your memory, Your selfless sacrifice—against You.*

Jesus is the heart and soul of who we are. No other faith, no matter how noble or base, has such a Lord. He is the foundation of our standing, and the pinnacle of our aspirations. He is Lord! and it is at our peril that we diminish Him in our lack of remembering. Let the world fly by; it holds no attraction for the one whose heart is fixed on Jesus. It is vapor. It is made of crumbling dust. It is already dying.

But One who *did* die—once, but rose never to die again—longs to be remembered. He longs to spend time with the children He died to save.

“This do in remembrance of Me.”

*1 Corinthians 11:24 KJV*

It seems then, that Christians may forget Christ! There could be no need for this loving exhortation, if there were not a fearful supposition that our memories might prove treacherous. Nor is this a bare supposition: it is, alas! too well confirmed in our experience, not as a possibility, but as a lamentable fact. It appears almost impossible that those who have been redeemed by the blood of the dying Lamb, and loved with an everlasting love by the eternal Son of God, should forget that gracious Saviour; but, if startling to the ear, it is, alas! too apparent to the eye to allow us to deny the crime. Forget Him who never forgot us! Forget Him who poured His blood forth for our sins! Forget Him who loved us even to the death! Can it be possible? Yes, it is not only possible, but conscience confesses that it is too sadly a fault with all of us, that we suffer Him to be as a wayfaring man tarrying but for a night. He whom we should make the abiding tenant of our memories is but a visitor therein. The cross where one would think that memory would linger, and unmindfulness would be an unknown intruder, is desecrated by the feet of forgetfulness. Does not your conscience say that this is true? Do you not find yourselves forgetful of Jesus? Some creature steals away your heart, and you are unmindful of Him upon whom your affection ought to be set. Some earthly business engrosses your attention when you should fix your eye steadily upon the cross. It is the incessant turmoil of the world, the constant attraction of earthly things which takes away the soul from Christ. While memory too well preserves a poisonous weed, it suffereth the rose of Sharon to wither. Let us charge ourselves to bind a heavenly forget-me-not about our hearts for Jesus our Beloved, and, whatever else we let slip, let us hold fast to Him.

*Charles Haddon Spurgeon*

# come away

As I sit by the pond and listen to the sounds of birds, and the gentle voice of the breeze moving through the trees; as I walk through the woods and hear squirrels quarrel with their neighbors, turkeys mutter and gobble to each other, and the steps of deer through the bed of fallen leaves; as I hear the night yips and chattering of coyotes announcing dinner to their young, and the soft yet unnerving hoot of the invisible owl; when I listen to the music of nature all around me I wonder why it is so much easier for me to find God here than in the city. I wonder why these sounds more readily point me to God than do the sounds of what we call civilization.

I have lived in the city and I have lived in the woods. I have lived where one is awakened by the sounds of a police raid being conducted across the street, and I have lived where one is awakened by the sounds of a wren inviting a mate to his newly made nest. I have lived where from my own bed I could hear the telephone conversations of someone in the house next door, and I have lived where I haven't heard another human voice for a week. I have lived where one could not hear the sounds of nature at all over the sounds of people with their mechanical and digital companions, and I have lived where the noise of a cell phone ringing sounded so alien as to be something from another planet.

Why is God so much more present in the sounds of the birds, the croaking of the frogs, the bleating snort of the deer? Why do I hear God more in silence itself?



God desires that His voice be dominant in the ears and hearts of people, but man has successfully muted that by the sounds and activity of his own creation. We are a people made deaf by the music of our own machines.

When a man-made sound does waft by from some distant source—say from the limestone quarry two miles away, a passing jet or helicopter, or even a pickup truck on the gravel road—I do not find myself being drawn toward God by those sounds. When I step onto the busy streets of the city, dodging the noisy cars and belching delivery trucks; when I hear the scream of tires and the tiresome arguments of passing pedestrians; when I am forced to listen to someone's inane cell phone chatter simply because I need to buy a tube of toothpaste at the drug store, I am not lifted by these sounds into the throne room of God.

While the sounds manufactured by civilization most often insulate us from Him, the quietude of nature draws us one step closer to the presence of God. The sounds of the city more often represent society's bent *away* from God, and as such, work against the indwelling Spirit's bent toward God.



"Be still, and know that I am God;  
I will be exalted among the nations,  
I will be exalted in the earth."

*Psalm 46:10 NIV*

We all need a quiet place where we can cease our striving, cease our noisemaking, and commune with God. It may not always be a forested glen. It may not be alongside a babbling brook. We can commune with Him in the arid solitude of the desert; on the shoreline, with the white noise of its pounding breakers to mask the sounds of everything else; on the freeway in the privacy of our car; or in a quiet, inner room of the house.

Our quiet place is one of our own design. No one else can define it for us. What is a perfect environment for one person to commune with God, may be perfectly wrong for another. Set one person in the stillness of a green forest and he may spend all of his time yearning for the more familiar cacophony of the city! Turn off one person's cell phone and he may hyperventilate from a panic attack. It is not important what or where the place is. It is important that it be a place without distractions—a place of comfort and peace.

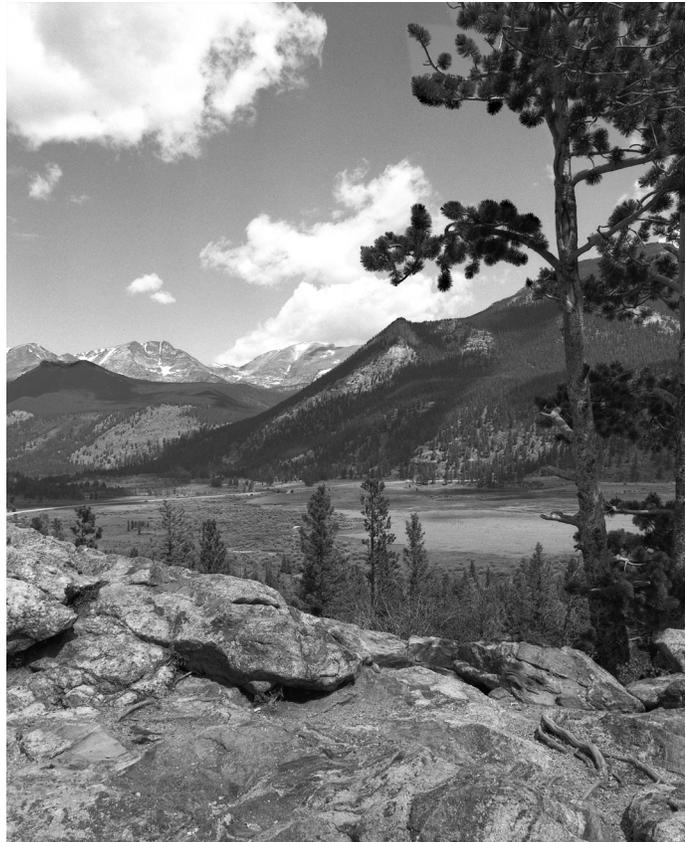
Whatever it is, and wherever it may be, we must find and use often that personal place where it is easier for us to find God's holy presence. We must find and frequent that place where His voice is not muted or masked by the invasive cacophony of the world. If it was important for Jesus, it should be important for each of us.

When evening came, after the sun had set, they began bringing to Him all who were ill and those who were demon-possessed. And the whole city had gathered at the door. And He healed many who were ill with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He was not permitting the demons to speak, because they knew who He was. In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there.

*Mark 1:32-35*

In the field we have a study hung round with texts for thought. From the cedar to the hyssop, from the soaring eagle down to the chirping grasshopper, from the blue expanse of heaven to a drop of dew, all things are full of teaching, and when the eye is divinely opened, that teaching flashes upon the mind far more vividly than from written books. Our little rooms are neither so healthy, so suggestive, so agreeable, or so inspiring as the fields. Let us count nothing common or unclean, but feel that all created things point to their Maker, and the field will at once be hallowed.

*C.H. Spurgeon*



*There is a place of quiet rest,  
Near to the heart of God,  
A place where sin cannot molest,  
Near to the heart of God.*

*There is a place of comfort sweet,  
Near to the heart of God,  
A place where we our Saviour meet,  
Near to the heart of God.*

*There is a place of full release,  
Near to the heart of God,  
A place where all is joy and peace,  
Near to the heart of God.*

*O Jesus, blest Redeemer,  
Sent from the heart of God,  
Hold us, who wait before Thee,  
Near to the heart of God.*

Cleland B. McAfee