

Scripture tells us that the Light of Christ comes to all of us—John 1:9

That Jesus is the Light of the world and there is plenty of Light to live by

And we don't have to stumble around in the darkness—John 8:12

That we can know the sound of Jesus' voice—like sheep know their shepherd—John 10:4, 27

Clearly, it is freely given and available to everyone

But we all know times when the Light seems dim and we struggle to find our way back to the Light

It may feel blocked or removed from us

However, like the sun, the Light is always present even behind the clouds

Like on a cloudy day, the sun gives off light and provides daylight

Like going from gray, rainy days to glorious sunshine, we resist returning to the gray, rainy days

We yearn to live in constant bright sunshine

Spiritually there are times when the Light is bright and all-consuming in amazing ways

But with time it fades—like youth coming home from the highs of camp to routine

Yearning to recreate the camp experience everywhere—if only we would...

We can be tempted to flit from one high to another, feeding an insatiable need within

Yet, that isn't realistic

Thomas Kelly suggests that we shouldn't try to hold off the fading Light—it will fade

The will weakens, the humdrum returns

But rather than work to stop the feeling that it is slipping away,

he suggests the answer is in learning the disciplines of God's will

The eternal Light doesn't die when ecstasy dies, any more than the sun dies with clouds

Rather we learn to reconnect with God on a daily and disciplined basis

It is waking up every morning and talking to God about the day to come

It is carrying on a constant conversation with God as we go about the day

It is becoming intentional about this process of living with God

God is no less present within one day than another day—God is always with us

We must learn the discipline of recognizing God's presence within

That it is not dependent on feeling the warmth of the Light or the brightness

Just know that it is a constant presence of God with us

It is in this steadiness of presence that the real work is done

This is where God and we can find our rhythm and live in the fullness and power

But it takes intentionality and perseverance

—we can't just ignore God between the brightness of Light we know from time to time

And expect to live in the same fullness and power of God living in us

We learn to tend this “continuously renewed immediacy” of God's Presence with us

To go deeper and stay in this place of Listening deeply to the Presence within

To find ways of increasingly being focused on this Presence

This is not a withdrawing to a monastic separation from external life

But rather a constant carrying of God into all of life

Living all of my life—“my sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life”

With God—Living all of this life in relationship with God

Live life—but all the while continue in a life of simple prayer and inward worship with God

How do we stay in this place of living intentionally with God?

It takes persistent practice of turning within toward God

Frank Laubach talked about the game with minutes—focus on God one second of every minute

A way of intentional turning to God that becomes a new habit  
“An inner, secret turning to God can be made fairly steady,  
after weeks and months and years of practice and lapses and failures and returns”  
It is the “weeks and months and years of practice and lapses and failures and returns”  
I want to think about... because this is where we get weary and lose heart  
The truth is that lapses, failures, and forgettings are frequent  
We find ourselves off track—life has loomed large and the Presence has faded  
As a child I thought I had to start over when this happened  
It was the source of inner turmoil—and many trips to the altar  
The sense that I had failed and was broken, must confess and start over

Two things were helpful here...

First—Thomas Kelly who wrote...

*Lapses and forgettings are so frequent... 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 up 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. (Testament of Devotion, page 39)*

I found release from that inner lashing out at myself for losing my way  
There was simple grace and permission to begin again and to turn towards God

The second was a new grasping of how much God loved me and understood me  
That God loved me just as I am and that God was not disappointed in me  
That God understood my struggles and knew where I got off track  
But God didn't hold that against me  
That I was created in God's image and that included all of me  
Even those places I struggled against  
I didn't have to get it right to be loved—in fact I couldn't earn it that way  
God simply loved me as I am in any given moment  
And that God wants to be in relationship with me—the real me  
Not just the redeemed me  
Suddenly there was a new freedom—no more inner lashings and God's love  
God and I could pick up the pieces and move on—that was freeing

It is in this new freedom that I could do the real work of allowing God to bring about change in me  
Knowing that I was loved and that my failings didn't break fellowship with God  
Meant that for the first time, I could look honestly at the broken parts of my life  
Looking at those broken places was less about my brokenness  
and more about God's desire to bring about transformation  
I wanted to smooth the rough edges and God wanted to walk with me through that

Sin—those places where I screw up and really make a mess of things

In the past this was cause for more pain, sense of failure, and another trip to the altar  
But now I felt a whole new permission to look at it with Jesus  
There was no condemnation—there wasn't even a mandate to deal with it now  
Rather an invitation to look together if I wanted to or was ready—this was huge  
In looking—I found 2 things—forgiveness and all the resources I needed to let go of sin  
I wasn't alone and there was grace and way forward

I was so readily forgiven and held so gently that I could relax and Listen to God's voice  
I began to understand that the work of forgiveness was a done deal  
That through Jesus' death and resurrection, he broke the power of sin over us  
Again everything had shifted internally—I was free to release my sin  
Accept the truth that the work of being forgiven was done long ago  
And with joy turn and continue this walk with God  
Rather than sin being hidden in the dark corners of my life  
It was as if the Light within shone brighter and around corners—bringing it all into Light

And I'm back to Kelly's words of no *self-recriminations*,  
*but breathe a silent prayer for forgiveness and begin again*  
I haven't broken fellowship with God—I don't have to start over—God is still present to me  
God does love me enough to walk with me through this

Then I'm back to this journey of living daily with God—moment by moment, step by step  
God and I doing life together  
Returning to the steadiness of God's Presence with me  
Finding the God rhythm in my life and living in the fullness and power of the Presence within