

Life: God dwells among his people

June 14, 2013

• *The Bible Studies for Life lesson for June 30 focuses on Exodus 26:30-33; 29: 43-46; 40:34-38.*

God desired a relationship with his creation from the very beginning. Sin separated us from him, but he still chose a people to be his own. He delivered them from bondage and gave them instruction regarding their interaction with him and with one another. God did not stop there. He came to dwell among his people.

God said: “Then I will dwell among the Israelites and be their God. They will know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them out of Egypt so that I might dwell among them. I am the Lord their God” (Exodus 29:45-46). God brought them out of Egypt so he might dwell among them. Captivity provides an opportunity for divine rescue. Deliverance led to his presence.

In Exodus, we read details about the tabernacle and the physical dwelling of God with his people. But this physical place is only a small taste of the dwelling God planned to do in the future.

He is close

After Christ’s resurrection and ascension, he sent his Holy Spirit to dwell among his people. The skin on our bodies replaced the walls of the tabernacle, and the veil that had divided the tabernacle was torn in two. Today, the power and presence of the most Holy God dwells and works in the souls of his people. He is close.

Although God dwells among us today, the sin that separated us from God in the garden still threatens to disrupt our communion with him. He dwells in our hearts, yet our minds, eyes and ears can be so far from him most days. We often view our work and responsibility as “secular” and worship at church as “spiritual.”

However, the gift of the Holy Spirit means we have the opportunity to be involved in spiritual things no matter what the activity. Our work can be worship. Our errands can be times of meditation. Our interaction with others can be part of his work in the world. Our lives should not be separated into “secular” and “spiritual” categories, but each day should be a dialogue with the God who dwells with and in you and me.

Brother Lawrence, a Carmelite Monk, spent his life practicing the presence of God. His daily duties were in the monastery kitchen, where he cooked and cleaned up after more than 100 members. He worked day after day, meal after meal, in the same room with some of the same people, doing the same tasks. But his daily tasks were drenched in conversations with God. People around him could tell he was filled with the Holy Spirit, and every spoken word and every physical action was an overflow of his active relationship with God.

Letters from Brother Lawrence

After his death in 1691, Joseph de Beaufort published some of the letters Brother Lawrence had written. In this small book, more than 300 years old, we read about how he continually walked with God. We learn how to practice his presence whether we are caught up in the monotony of daily tasks or taken off guard by the unexpected life changes.

Brother Lawrence lived from his heart and left a gift to everyone behind. Throughout his life, he learned the most essential truth in the Christian life: how to remain the presence of Christ daily.

Here is an excerpt from Brother Lawrence's *The Practice of the Presence of God*:

“Completely immersed in my understanding of God’s majesty, I used to shut myself up in the kitchen. There alone, after having done everything that was necessary for my work, I would devote myself to prayer in all the time that was left. The prayer time was really taken at both the beginning and the end of my work. At the beginning of my duties, I would say to the Lord with confidence: ‘My God, since you are with me and since by your will I must occupy myself with external things, please grant me the grace to remain with you, in your presence. Work with me, so that my work might be the very best. Receive as an offering of love both my work and all my affections.’

“During my work I would always continue to speak to the Lord as though he were right with me, offering him my services and thanking him for his assistance. And at the end of my work, I used to examine it carefully. If I found good in it, I thanked God. If I noticed faults, I asked his forgiveness without being discouraged, and then went on with my work, still dwelling in him. Thus, continuing in this practice of conversing with God throughout each day and quickly seeking his forgiveness when I fell or strayed, his presence has become as easy and natural to me now as it once was difficult to attain.”

Time spent in his presence

Today, you may be overwhelmed by your career or by your responsibilities at home. Perhaps you spend a good deal of time in the car or running errands that seem to consume most moments of your day. Those activities, in themselves, may be far from spiritual in nature. But God dwells with you and in you.

Every moment of your day can be spent in his presence and infused by his

power. Take time this week to involve God in your life by weaving a conversation with him through all of your daily duties and activities. Wake up praying and fall asleep praying. Whisper to him as you drive, as you work, as you go to meetings and as you play with your children. God dwells among his people today. Do not miss out on his presence.