

BEING IN THE PLACE FOR SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION TO OCCUR

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Hurry is a curse robbing us of our life. Living under an overwhelming number of tasks which are urgent but not really important and never ending bottomless pits of open ended responsibilities, all rob me of being able to live in the way God intended. Nurturing “being” requires the commitment to move from living as a “human doing” to a “human being”. The greatest hindrance to the transforming work of God in a Christian’s life is the pace which we choose to live.

I had come into the parish seeing its great potential as a learning center, a kind of mini-university in which I was the resident professor. And then one day, in a kind of shock of recognition I saw that it was in fact a worship center... Out of that recognition a conviction grew: that my primary educational task as pastor was to teach people to pray. Eugene Peterson *The Contemplative Pastor*

We have read the studies on stress. We joke and sometimes complain about workaholics. Most people I meet agree that life is too complex, too crowded, and too fast. But most of us have believed the lie –Lies are the favorite tool of Satan—that we are victims in a world on the run and we cannot live differently. Embedded in this lie deception is a buried faulty conviction that if we did live at a different pace we would be ineffective and disconnected from the world in which God has placed us. We see ourselves either as powerless victims carried along by the flood currents of activity or as martyrs diving into the streams in order to rescue the perishing. I wonder if non-Christians look at the lives of most Christians and say, “Wow, that looks like real life—I want what they have!”

Exposing the lie and living under God’s truth requires that we—

- **Live in the present moment—see each morning as a new beginning. Each day be prepared to meet God. Let the uncertainty of life and the certainty of death bring you to fresh commitment and devotion (37-43).**
- **Live each day as received by providence from God. Living with uncertainty of when life will end keeps one from sin (45).**
- **Live in light of eternal reign. The present days are like school—brief intense lessons for our future role in His kingdom. The kingdom is within us now and our “willing” lets it arise from inside us (46).**
- **Live knowing what we can transfer from this life to the next. What can we take from this life? -- prudence, justice, temperance,**

courage, understanding, love, concern for poor, faith in Christ, freedom from anger, hospitality (44).¹

Since May 2003 an important change has occurred in my life. It is the commitment to live in a “unhurried place”. I have been attempting to engage in the practice of the disciplines, with various levels of intentionality and consistency for 30 years. Yet, in early May of this year I would confess that my basic view of myself was, “I don’t like the person I wake up with each morning.” And by that I do not mean my wife. After months of reading thousands of pages in preparation for a doctoral course with Dr. Dallas Willard, and during the same time period having many opportunities for ministry in teaching and consulting an honest self assessment would me that I was living a double life. On the outside I was actively serving Christ. On the inside I felt I was running up a steep, dark, lonely mountain path. My desire to quit and walk away was at times an almost overwhelming emotions of anger, hurt and loneliness.

At least one tap root sin in my busy life was pride. An unhurried life is a fruit of a humble heart. Pride, on the other hand, feeds, drives and calls out a busy life.

Nothing happens in the proud heart. It is disconnected from the flow of God’s grace and the presence of God. Humility is multi-dimensional. A humble heart is humble toward God. All else is abandoned to a preference for Him and His will to be done. A humble heart is a patient, enduring, peacemaker with others. A humble heart is aware of the weak.²

I had been a Christian long enough to know how to construct a mask of proper Christianity that my family, friends and others expect to see. Hidden away in my thought life – I fought losing battles with lust, anger and fear. The motive fueling many of my choices was simply to do the right thing so that my empty heart would not get caught and I would not lose my place of leadership. Beneath that protective mask were motives of pride, fear, and a dark side that scared me when it was exposed to the light of reflective thought. My days felt like they swung from frantic driven busyness ending when I hit the wall of exhaustion. Recovery from exhaustion merely armed me to reenter the fray and begin the cycle all over again.

But *The Charlotte Observer’s* Ken Garfield thinks that maybe U.S. culture is going to hell because of its surrender to the rat race “...no matter what your faith, or even if you have no faith, life is too demanding to allow anyone to step back and a day off.” Faith is what allows people to emulate God and rest from their works. “Life is too demanding” for those of little faith, because of the inability to rest is the incapacity of let go of the illusion of control. The constant need to work, shop, and meet demands can be a practical denial that God is in control. Conversely, a spiritual discipline of regular rest from the constant drive to check items off a to-do list can be a powerful symbol of our trust in God’s sufficiency. WHERE WE STAND Christianity Today, November 2003. (page 42)

One of the first steps in repentance was writing a few close friends and in a spirit of confession asked them, actually I pleaded with them, for concentrated prayer on my behalf for the 100 days from May 16 to August 23. I wanted to meet with God and I longed for a deeper level of surgery that would reach deeply into my heart touching the parts of my character that looked very little like Christ.

¹ The Life of Antony & The Letter to Marcellinus Athanasius. Translation & Introduction by Robert C. Gregg. New York: Paulist Press, 1980. NOTE: the number in parentheses are the page numbers from which I paraphrased the quotes.

² The Imitation of Christ. Thomas a’ Kempis.

This paper is a record of some of how God answered those 100 days of prayer. The most important truth I learned is that the training process involving the practice of spiritual disciplines must be painted on a canvas of an unhurried life. God truly wants to give us life. Jesus came to purchase us from the thief who steals, kills and destroys and give us abundant life (John 10:10) The Gospel really is powerful. It really is the power to transform the human heart filled with pride, lust, and fear into Christ like humility, love and peace.

Many North American disciples of Jesus experience less of the Gospel than we sense the New Testament describes and Jesus models. We have missed that the words of challenge Jesus gave to potential disciples were words like – Kingdom life is for those who are “seeking”, “thirsting for it”, “dwelling with Him”, “loving Him”, and “obeying Him”. I no longer believe Jesus teaching on capturing the human heart to free them and give them life flowing from Him is describing spiritual activities such as attending church programs or crowding certain spiritual practices into our busy life. The life of a disciple is lived in the moment by moment reality of following Jesus. I can only follow if I can SEE and HEAR Him.

A frantic driven person cannot “see” because they are moving so quickly that they must keep their vision far out in front of the present moment seeking to anticipate the fast approaching winding curves in the road. Much like speeding down a freeway limits your freedom to look around at the scenery going by, while walking a winding mountain trail allows you to see each wildflower and mossy rock your feet carry you near. Yet Jesus only lives with us in the present moment (Matthew 6: 34). We are moving away from following Him if we seek to live in the past or the future. The Bible is filled with exhortations to LEARN from our past and to LEAN into the future with faith and hope. But to live in either is to live away from King Jesus. His kingdom comes, His will is done in the present choices, the present moments, the present reality that is being created by His grace.

The ideal minister must love and understand people, but must know and love still more the will and word of God. P.T. Forsyth THE IDEAL MINISTRY

A frantic driven person cannot “hear”. The hurried life sees only the next task to produce, the next problem to solve, the next obstacle to be mastered. There is no time to reflect on what has just occurred. So much personal energy of a busy life is being focused on driving your life forward over the next hill that it seems an unnecessary luxury, or even a distraction, to stop and listen in order to learn from what has just happened.

When I am hurried I repeat my mistakes and fail to learn valuable lessons from the failures. Still pressing on to new places and then finding I am still living with the same old problems. Hurried people, from God’s perspective are running from life instead of living in it. Life is the creation of God taking place around us in the present moment. Living in an “unhurried place” lets me examine the possible choices in front of me with a spirit of anticipation. Part of the unhurried place is to see my day as one looking through the glass at the sweet shop and being excited by the many tasty treats before me. As one stops and listens to learn from the recent past those learnings are then applied to planning HOW one will move into the choices you face. Living in an unhurried pace allows me to partner with the creative God and move into the future with Him.

Temptations encountered by those in leadership—

1. Unfaithfulness
2. Comfortable self-centeredness
3. Despair (2)

3 Ways to prevent the world from shaping us into its image and 3 Ways to experience life in the Spirit—Solitude, Silence, Prayer. (4)

SOLITUDE--

(8) Solitude is the “furnace” where transformation occurs.

(10) Ruled by the “musts” and the “oughts” we fail to reflect and see if the things we are doing are worth doing.

(10) The false self lives on social compulsion. How am I perceived by the world becomes the basis for two enemies; anger and greed.

(11) Anger is the impulsive response to a self that demands being fed by others around me.

(11) Anger is a “professional vice” in the contemporary ministry.

(13) Three temptations of Jesus—be relevant, be spectacular, be powerful.

(14) Solitude is NOT privacy—being away from others to think only of self.

And solitude is not a station to recharge so we gain strength for a competitive and driven life.

(15) Solitude is a stripping away, and exposing of nakedness so we can really see ourselves. See our anger, greed and how our driven self lives on/by responses to us by others.

(17) Solitude is an absolute surrender to Jesus as Lord, and a coming to meet with Him alone.

(20) The fruit of solitude is compassion. Compassion is willingness to go with others to the place where they are weak. Our heart goes from closed to open and we relate to people without using them to gain meaning and value for ourselves—relating without judging others. Solitude reshapes the self-righteous into gentle, caring, forgiving persons.

SILENCE—

Silence completes solitude. Silence is a “portable cell” to move from solitude into action.

(34) “Silence is the home of the word.” Silence gives strength to the word.

(35) Silence makes us pilgrims—Proverbs 10:19, Psalm 39:1, James 3:2.

Silence guards the fire within. Words open the door of our heart and the heat escapes—we become lukewarm. Silence teaches us to speak –loving, resting, and secure.

PRAYER—

(53) Solitude and silence are the context for prayer. Prayer in a place of solitude and silence is not escaping *from* so much as to *be with* God.

(57-58) Prayer is not just the intellectual exercise of talking to God (bring problems –He gives solutions) or thinking about God (figure out and analyze Him).

(59) Prayer is to be heart prayer. Standing in the presence of God as one a unity of all physical, emotional, intellectual, volitional energies. “Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not

**realize that Christ Jesus is in you--unless, of course, you fail the test?" 2
Corinthians 13:5³**

For spiritual disciplines to infuse and unleash God's grace and truth in transforming power requires space for effective operation. They take up a lot of room! I had never realized the space that is required since many of the actual practices (for example: writing a check to give, reading a section of Scripture, or fasting from a meal) only require small amounts of time within a day. But it is much like physical exercise. There is a limit to how effectively you can lift weights, run, and perform flexing exercises without space. Imagine dropping to the floor and doing push-ups and sit-ups in a crowded room where wall to wall people are engaging in social chatter while balancing a plate of finger foods and cold cups of lemonade.

The space required for spiritual exercises to work down into my heart could also be compared to something I have learned in almost 30 years of marriage. My wife, Pandora, and I talk almost every day. Even when I travel I seek to call her at least once a day. But often our talk is primarily on a level of what we are DOING or have just DONE since our last conversation. It is also "action talk"—the work of solving problems in parenting, finances or the family calendar. But we both long for deeper, intimate, sharing talks. Intimacy requires space. I have noticed that when we go away together, for us that is often the beach, it takes several hours or even a couple of days before the deep level of talking begins to flow between us. Heart sharing is just not something you can force into a 30 minute slot by simply asking probing questions. When I have tried to force it by prodding my dear one with my questions it feels forced and the motive driving our conversation shifts from being together, as an expression of loving each other to my self centered, fear filled anxious heart working to fix this lack of close sharing. It becomes my job to prevent our marriage from drifting into dangerous shallow waters. I end up actually threatening our intimacy by being driven to manufacture it. A healthy process of connecting our hearts is like a slow walk down a gentle slope where we talk our way down to our fears, dreams and hopes by finishing the more surface conversations, and then enter into just "BEING" together. Often it looks like a long walk, holding hands and ending with a good cup of coffee. Intimacy requires space—an unhurried place.

Love endeavors forever to be present, to converse with, to enjoy, to be united with its object; love to be talking of the beloved, reciting his praises, telling his stories, repeating his words, imitating his gestures, transcribing his copy in everything; and every degree of union and every degree of likeness is a degree of love. For we are not to use God and religion as men use perfumes, with which they are delighted when they have them, but can well be without them. True charity is restless, till it enjoys God in such instances in which it is like hunger and thirst, it must be fed, or it cannot be answered: and nothing can supply the presence, or make recompence for the absence of God, or of the effects of His favour and the light of His countenance. Jeremy Taylor THE RULE AND EXERCISES OF HOLY LIVING. Longman's, Green & Co. 1941.

My life with God follows the same pattern. There is not shortcut to slowly talking through our active life to our inner core. Something different happens in my life when I pray—and then carry my prayers with me through the day. Replaying the memory of a recent loving interlude with my wife keeps her close by—even when I may be thousands

³ The Way of the Heart. Henri Nouwen. New York: Ballentine Publishers, 1981. (note: parentheses are the page numbers. I have chosen not to give exact quotes but paraphrased summaries of key ideas)

of mile away. When I meditate on a passage of Scripture in the morning but then have room in my thoughts to walk with that Word through my day the treasuring Him and our relationship is fresh and colors how I see and hear—how I react to the unfolding day.

One indication of whether I am in “my unhurried place” where I want my heart to be is what I do in the space between tasks. As I drive to and from the seminary where I teach, as I walk across campus to and from meetings those between moments are best used not to keep working on what I just left on my desk, or in preparing for my next commitment, but to simply walk hand in hand with my Lord Jesus. To consciously BE with Him, acknowledging His presence, reflecting on what He is teaching me through the activities and people that are touching my life. This commitment to be with Jesus in the between moments means I must allot time before the activity to prepare. Planning intentional “set-up” and “break-down” time means a two hour meeting may actually be four or more hours in commitment. When I fail to count that cost, I am filling all of my between moments living in the past of what I have just been doing, or in the future to which I am running. Jesus lives in the present moment! I recently watched a mother at the end of the work day holding the hand of her three to four year old heading into the grocery store talking with someone about work on the cell phone. I wonder if Jesus feels as ignored by how I am using those between moments as that young child did.

Signs of true faith. 1) An earnest and vehement prayer: for it is impossible we should heartily believe the things of God and the glories of the Gospel, and not most importantly desire them. For everything is desired according to our belief of its excellency and possibility. 2) To do nothing for vainglory, but wholly for the interests of religion and these articles we believe; valuing not at all the rumors of men, but the praise of God, to whom, by faith, we have given up all our intellectual faculties. 3) To be content with God for our judge and our patron, for our Lord, for our friend; desiring God to be all in all to us, as we are, in our understanding and affections, wholly His. Jeremy Taylor. THE RULE AND EXERCISE OF HOLY LIVING. Longman's, Green & Co. 1941.

Recently an appointment with a student ended earlier than I had anticipated. I had over an hour before my next meeting. I had to choose from the following options—1) whip out my cell phone and seek to complete some phone calls listed in my day planner, 2) rush back up to my office and see if I could complete a couple of tasks laying on my desk that were actually on yesterday's to-do list, or 3) stay in the part of campus where I was now, near where my next appointment would take place, and be in quiet place alone with Jesus. In the past the third option would have never even come to mind. Only six months ago I would have only considered options one or two—because that would get more done, cram a few more completed tasks into the productivity of my day. I chose option 3. I was able to revisit both Scripture and prayer disciplines that had introduced my day, thank Jesus for what had been accomplished in my day to this point, and be grateful I could move into the next very important meeting refreshed, focused and with the energy that comes from an attitude of faith – anticipating and excited to see what God was going to do during this next moment.

Hope and fasting are said to be the two wings of prayer. Fasting is but as the wing of a bird; but hope is like the wing of an angel, soaring up to heaven, and bears our prayers to the throne of grace. Without hope, it is impossible to pray; but hope makes our prayers reasonable, passionate, and religious; for it relies upon God's promise, or experience, or providence and story. Prayer is always in proportion to our hope, zealous and affectionate. Jeremy Taylor. THE RULE AND EXERCISE OF HOLY LIVING. Longmans, Green & Co. 1941.

I am in one sense DOING less but I am seeing more fruit. And actually I am less behind in the middle of a semester because I am saying no to more things, and have a better perspective on what God really wants me to give myself to doing. I also have time to act on promptings of the Spirit to call someone and check on them, or take the longer path back to my office so I may stop by and see someone briefly and offer to pray for them. People are not just resources to help me complete my tasks they are fellow disciples of Jesus that I have the honor of being around.

In my “unhurried place” I find it easier to practice James 1:19 to listen before I speak. James connects listening and the ability to process anger. Living in my unhurried place my anger attacks have gone down. I even ask God if He is letting me see something so that I can simply pray, or does he want to use me to be part of the change or action that I perceive is needed. I do not assume that everything He lets me see is for me to add to my “to-do list”. I can move into the circle of influence in the way of prayer and not always jumping to take personal responsibility. I also have the time to say, “**When** Lord do you want me to invest in this aspect of ministry?” I could have been more effective in my leadership if I had only thought through how the people I am with can be best approached and not simply dump my thoughts out when they first appear in my mind. This whole process of reflection prior to action has helped me to live more from the place where I can take what God allows me to SEE and HEAR that need to be addressed but not to be overwhelmed with adding them to my list of “MUST BE DONE TODAY or THIS WEEK.” Instead I look for ways to capture my insights and then file them where they can be revisited as God helps me discern the better moment for action.

Perhaps the most central characteristic of authentic leadership is the relinquishing of the impulse to dominate others. David Cooper, PSYCHIATRY AND ANTI-PSYCHIATRY

While all Christians need nurture and sustenance, the active Christian leader who encounters spiritual and emotional stress daily has special, urgent needs. If the shepherd is not fed along with the sheep, that inner hunger and fatigue, those unhealed hurts, can cause the shepherd to do great, uncounscious harm to those within his or her care. Flora Slosson Wuellner FEED MY SHEPHERDS: SPIRITUAL HEALING FOR THOSE IN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP

Two weeks ago I was tossing and turning in bed unable to sleep and I knew that sometime during the day I had left my unhurried place. Much like losing a trail in the woods I had lost my bearings and was filled with uncertainty. It took me two days to find my way back. I knew I was not where I wanted to be—a gnawing frantic sense of not getting everything before me done, anger rising up over every obstacle in my path of pursuing to get things done, and all of my thinking as I drove home or prepared for bed were still on the unfinished tasks of the day. I could not see or hear Jesus walking with me. I felt alone and overwhelmed.

In the process of seeking to get back to my unhurried place I learned that a discipline to help me stay in the “unhurried place” which I call “framing the day”. Framing the day is an intentional way to move into and through my day. I begin my day with thanksgiving. As I wake in the morning I begin to speak in my heart words of gratitude for the new day. King Jesus is gifting me with the opportunity to walk with Him through the day as an eager disciple learns from his master. But even more important for me is to intentionally close my day. This cannot wait until bedtime. For me it is when I am packing up to leave my office at the conclusion of the day. It helps me to physically lay both hands on my desk palms down, close my eyes and say quietly

out loud something like, “Lord, it is enough. This has been good. We have done some kingdom stuff together. True, not everything is done but what has been done is good, and it is enough. Now help me to go from here to rest, renew, play and love my family and others as you give me opportunity. If it is in Your plan, let us return to this work later. But for today let me lay it down. This work day is finished.”

No is a complete sentence. Believe me, we do not need hassled, bitter ministers. We don't want you to talk about this being the day the Lord hath made and that we should rejoice and savor its beauty and poignancy when secretly you're tearing around like the white rabbit; we need you to walk the walk. And we need you to walk a little more slowly. Anne Lamott to a graduating seminary class quoted in CONTEXT

One of the ways we experience spiritual decay and bondage is how we respond to the deep desire to be within the “inner ring” and not one left outside. From this desire grows all of competition, attack, withdrawal, greed and covetousness.⁴

Education stirs up and trains in pride, envy and competition. “puffs up their minds with a sense of their own abilities.” We educate for the opposite of humility and then grieve the results (250).⁵

Why is living in the unhurried place not only the preferred place to live, but an essential aspect in making disciples of Jesus? Is the pace at which people live, and the way they handle goals, time, and intensity only a matter of personal preference or personality? I am willing to acknowledge that God hardwires people in unique ways. We vary in our capacity for activity just as much as we vary in our number of talents and gifts. It should not be surprising that there is much variation in what the “unhurried place” looks like among those disciples living with Jesus in it. But Scripture is clear on its reality and importance.

[Romans 14:17](#)

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, **but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,**

When God is my King my life is marked by righteous choices, peace and joy. Let us conclude by reflecting on peace and joy. Peace and joy are more than emotions they are conditions. They are description of a state of being.

TWO INDICATORS OF BEING IN THE UNHURRIED PLACE WITH JESUS (This section is taken from my notes during lectures by Dallas Willard, May 2003) PEACE/Shalom—

Peace is a condition of pervasive enjoyment of good that permeates your total being at all levels including that of emotion and feelings of the bodily organs and muscles. The word “shalom” has the Biblical and traditional meaning of this overall enjoyment of well being.

The opposite of peace is not war or conflict, but deadness to what is good in our total surroundings from spiritual or physical. In response to deadness desire goes mad, disordered, and insatiable—Conflict is then the inevitable result.

⁴ [The Weight of Glory](#). C.S. Lewis

⁵ [A Serious Call to the Devout Life](#). William Law

This (heavenly peace) alone can be truly called and esteemed the peace of the rational being, consisting as it does in the perfectly ordered and harmonious enjoyment of God and of one another in God. Saint Augustine

[Isaiah 26:3-4](#) You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you. ⁴Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD, is the Rock eternal.

[James 4:1-3](#) What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? ²You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. ³When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

[Ephesians 4:18-19](#) They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.

¹⁹Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.

[Romans 1:24-32](#) Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. ²⁵They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator--who is forever praised. Amen²⁶Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. ²⁷In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

²⁸Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. ²⁹They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, ³⁰slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; ³¹they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. ³²Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

A critical activity practiced in the unhurried place is reflecting on attacks and losses and choosing a response. Here is an exercise in taking Scripture and seeking wisdom in how one can “in peace” respond to people around us.

Take [Ephesians 4:15](#)

“Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.”

Now substitute all of the defining descriptions of love found in [1 Corinthians 13:4-8](#) and read [Ephesians 4:15](#) several times inserting the list of characteristics. Pause after reading each one to reflect on how it guides your response.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

⁵It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of

wrongs. ⁶Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ⁸Love never fails.
EXAMPLE: “Instead, speaking the truth in PATIENCE”, “speaking the truth in KINDNESS”—now we know how to pray for God’s grace and what steps of obedience in faith will look like.

Dr. Gary Chapman has written in several books about five love languages. Let me list them in the same way he presented them in a recent marriage seminar.

- 1) Words of affirmation – Life and death are in the tongue.
- 2) Gifts- universal in the cultures of the world as a demonstration of love
- 3) Acts of service – self-sacrifice for the sake of the beloved.
- 4) Spending quality time – undivided attention and eye contact
- 5) Physical touch – appropriate to age and gender

Because one of the ways that the disciples of Jesus are different from others is in the radical love they have for their enemies (those who threaten our peace), ***how can I draw from these find languages that express love to form a response to an enemy?***

JOY---

Joy is a pervasive sense of profound, overall well-being based on giving and receiving of love. Fear robs you of joy. Joy is a primary foundation to kingdom ministry, flowing from vision, peace and righteousness and reinforcing them. It is a gift and a duty.

Joy is our first line of defense against weakness and failure. Joy is not pleasure. It is pleasant. A person without joy tries to stimulate joy through pleasure. Joy can exist even in a context of sorrow and which is not conducive to pleasure.

You have every right not to be full of joy. But you can choose a life of joy, and change the things that rob it from you. Basically, we can stop trying so hard, and direct our mind to God and to our place in His world, now and forever.

What evaporates our joy?

- 1) Sins and failure—solution: accept that I am a failure and that is why I need atonement.
- 2) Fear of what will happen to us—solution: keep the Lord before us.
- 3) Pressure of our work, responsibilities—solution: remember that God is fair and merciful.

[Proverbs 15:13](#) A happy heart makes the face cheerful, but heartache crushes the spirit.

[Proverbs 15:15](#) All the days of the oppressed are wretched, but the cheerful heart has a continual feast.

[Proverbs 17:22](#) A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.

[Nehemiah. 8:10](#) Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."

[Psalm 90:14-17](#) Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days. ¹⁵Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, for as many years as we have seen trouble. ¹⁶May your deeds be shown to your servants, your splendor to their children. ¹⁷May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us; establish the work of our hands for us--yes, establish the work of our hands.

[Psalm 92:4](#) For you make me glad by your deeds, O LORD; I sing for joy at the works of your hands.

Psalm 97:11-12 Light is shed upon the righteous and joy on the upright in heart. Rejoice in the LORD, you who are righteous, and praise his holy name.

John 15:11 **I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.**

Philippians 2:2then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.

Philippians 3:1 Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you.

Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

John 3:29 The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete.

John 16:24 **Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.**

Psalm 16:8 I have set the LORD always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

Psalm 55:22 Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall.

One of Thomas a' Kempis prayers updated into my words. Book 3 Chapter 15:

Grant me Your grace, most merciful Jesus that it may be with me, work in me, and persevere with me, even unto the end. Grant that I may ever desire and wish whatsoever is most pleasing and dear to You. Let Your will be mine, and let my will always follow Your will, and entirely align with it. May I choose and reject what ever You reject; yes let it be impossible for me to choose or reject except according to Your will.

Grant that I may die to all worldly things, and for Your sake love to be despised and unknown in this world. Grant to me, above all things that I can desire to rest in You, and that in You my heart may be at peace. You alone its rest; apart from You all things are hard and unquiet. In You alone, the supreme and eternal God, I will lay down in peace and take my rest. Amen ⁶

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⁶ The Imitation of Christ. Thomas a' Kempis.