

Experiencing the of Presence of God
2 Years of Transformation by Mind Renewal
(by Frank Laubach, PhD., edited by Bob Clarkson)

**Written by Dr. Frank C. Laubach, a Modern Mystic,
serving as a missionary at Dansalan, Lake Lanao,
Philippine Islands to his father.**

INTRODUCTION

A rare experience awaits anyone who reads these selections from the letters of Frank Laubach. In them a great spirit has opened the very doors of his soul and invited us into the inner sanctuary to share his experience of God. To read this book quietly and with sympathetic insight is to find oneself transported into an atmosphere of dedication, of discernment and of spiritual ecstasy which reminds one of St. Francis of Assisi. It is as exciting as breathing the ozone of a mountain summit and makes the reader long to rise on the wings of the spirit as the author has done.

Who is this man who expresses himself, when occasion requires, in the scientific language of the day yet speaks with a timeless voice of a great mystic? It is very characteristic of Dr. Laubach that in these letters he gives us only the barest glimpses of himself and his work. The fascinating story of his service to the Moros during the years when the letters were written is barely suggested. What is of supreme importance to him and what he wants in all modesty to share with others is his own inner religious experience, yet to know something more of the man and his work gives new meaning to the letters.

Loneliness to Never Alone - Frank Laubach

Frank C. Laubach went with his wife to the Philippines as a missionary in 1915. For the first seven years of his service he gave himself unreservedly and with great effectiveness to the building of evangelical churches on the North Coast of the great southern island of Mindanao and to the broader contacts with the culture and leadership in the Islands which has always characterized him. These churches on the North Coast have continued to progress and still show markedly the effect of his formative influence.

His next great service was concerned with the establishment and conduct of a Union Theological Seminary in Manila. Dr. Laubach was a prime mover in these plans and went to Manila not only to be one of the Seminary's first teachers, but to give strong spiritual leadership in the changing life of the city. The Seminary continues to be a vitally important institution of the evangelical movement in the Islands. Here again he rendered constructive service, the results of which continue. It was during this period that Dr. Laubach wrote his scholarly and sympathetic book, 'The People of the Philippines, and his delightful picture of the Islands for young people entitled Seven Thousand Emeralds.

But all the time he was doing these things that seemed to require his first attention Dr. Laubach's thought went with increasing frequency to the Mohammedan Moros on the Island of Mindanao with whom he had had some contacts during the first period of his service. These were a wild and backward people, about 500,000 in number, who looked upon the Christian Filipinos as their traditional enemies.

Loneliness to Never Alone - Frank Laubach

They seemed almost completely inaccessible to approach by a Christian missionary. To win them, as he well knew, would require unbounded patience and great Christian resourcefulness. Dr. Laubach believed in the power of God to accomplish even this task and felt that he had a call to undertake it. So in 1930, a short time before the first of these letters were written, Dr. Laubach went to Dansalan in the uplands of Mindanao to begin his remarkable service for the Moros.

The letters reflect with complete frankness the lonesomeness of those first days. For reasons of health and education Mrs. Laubach and their surviving son Robert were compelled, during these first months, to stay at Dumaguete, a mission station on another island, and he was alone. This was the time when he was learning the language and coming to understand something of the way of the life of the Moros and therefore, he was isolated from any intimate fellowship with them. It was characteristic of the greatness of the man that this very lonesomeness led him to the deep mystic experience of God which is recorded in his letters.

It was not long before the Moros began to realize the nobility of the spirit of this American who had come among them as their simple friend. As he started to help them in various practical ways their response grew in cordiality until at the end of an almost incredibly short time they had come to regard him as their best friend. And this indeed he was, for he discerned their greatest needs and with untiring industry and creative ability of a rare order set out to meet them. In 1930 he found these Moros almost entirely an illiterate people.

Loneliness to Never Alone - Frank Laubach

It is probably fair to say that one-half of the 90,000 who live about the Lake can now read and write. He found them wedded to the past and ill prepared to play their part in the modern world. He has done nothing to destroy their pride in the best of their past. Indeed, he has done much to preserve the valuable elements in their culture, but he has also helped them to realize that they are a part of the great world and to adjust themselves to its life.

This man who writes with such poetic beauty of his inner spiritual experiences has also been a man of intense practical activity. He has devised a remarkably effective method of adult education and promoted it with great ability; he has developed industries, fostered health service, stimulated the introduction of better seed and in a thousand and one ways proved himself a practical friend to these people. Yet no one who reads these letters can fail to see that through it all Dr. Laubach yearned to help them to a richer experience of God. He has not sought primarily to win them to baptism, although some have sought baptism as a result of his ministry, but he has desired to make a deep and transforming spiritual experience the basis of their life.

Experiencing the Presence of God

Chapter 1: How Transformation Began

January 3, 1930

To be able to look backward and say, "This has been the finest year of my life.", that is glorious! But anticipation! To be able to look ahead and say, "The present year can and shall be better!", that is more glorious!

If we said such things about our achievements, we would be consummate egotists. But if we are speaking of God's kindness, and we speak truly, we are but grateful. And this is what I do witness. I have done nothing but open windows – God has done all the rest. There have been few if any conspicuous achievements. There has been a succession of marvelous experiences of the presence of God. I feel, as I look back over the year, that it would have been impossible to have held much more without breaking with sheer joy. It was the most lonesome year, in some ways the hardest year, of my life, but the most gloriously full of voices from heaven.

As for me I resolved that I would succeed better this year with my experiment of filling every minute full of the thought of God than I succeeded last year.

January 20, 1930

Although I have been a minister and a missionary for fifteen years, I have not lived the entire day of every day in minute by minute effort to follow the will of God. Two years ago a profound dissatisfaction led me to begin trying to line up my actions with the will of God about every fifteen minutes or every half hour. Other people to whom I confessed this intention said it was impossible. I judge from what I have heard that few people are really trying even that. But this year I have started out trying to live all my waking moments in conscious listening to the inner voice, asking without ceasing, "What, Father, do you desire said? What, Father, do you desire done this minute?"

It is clear that this is exactly what Jesus was doing all day every day.

Loneliness to Never Alone - Frank Laubach

January 26, 1930

For the past few days I have been experimenting in a more complete surrender than ever before. I am taking by deliberate act of will, enough time from each hour to give God much thought. Yesterday and today I have made a new adventure, which is not easy to express. I am feeling God in each movement, by an act of will – willing that He shall direct these fingers that now strike this typewriter - willing that He shall pour through my steps as I walk - willing that He shall direct my words as I speak, and my very jaws as I eat!

You will object to this intense introspection. Do not try it, unless you feel dissatisfied with your own relationship with God, but at least allow me to realize all the leadership of God I can. I am disgusted with the pettiness and futility of my wandering self. If the way out is not more perfect slavery to God then what is the way out? { Paul speaks of our liberty in Christ. I am trying to be utterly free from everybody, free from my own self, but completely enslaved to the will of God every moment of this day.

We used to sing a song in the church in :

"Moment by moment I'm kept in His love. Moment by moment I've life from above.. Looking to Jesus till glory doth shine. Moment by moment, O Lord, I am thine."

It is exactly that, moment by moment, in every waking moment, surrender, responsiveness, obedience, sensitiveness, pliability, 'lost in His love,' so that I now have the mind-bent to explore with all my might, to respond to God as a violin responds to the bow of the master.

Loneliness to Never Alone - Frank Laubach

January 26, 1930 (continued)

In defense of my opening my soul and laying it bare to the public gaze in this fashion, I may say that it seems to me that we really seldom do anybody much good excepting as we share the deepest experiences of our souls in this way. It is not the fashion to tell your inmost thoughts, but there are many wrong fashions, and concealment of the best in us is wrong. I disapprove of the usual practice of talking 'small talk' whenever we meet, and holding a veil over our souls. If we are so impoverished that we have nothing to reveal but small talk, then we need to struggle for more richness of soul. As for me I am convinced that this spiritual pilgrimage which I am making is infinitely worthwhile, the most important thing I know of to talk about. And talk I shall while there is anybody to listen.

Outside the window, as I completed the last page, has been one of the most splendid sunsets I have ever seen. And these words came singing through my soul, "Looking to Jesus 'till glory doth shine!" Open your soul and entertain the glory of God and after a while that glory will be reflected in the world about you and in the very clouds above your head.