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Devotions for Sacred Parenting
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Requests for information should be addressed to:
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God Is in the Room

*Where can I go from your Spirit?
 Where can I flee from your presence?
 If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
 if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.
 If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
 if I settle on the far side of the sea,
 even there your hand will guide me,
 your right hand will hold me fast.*

Psalm 139:7–10



I'd like to suggest a motto for Christian family life: "God is in the room."

While God is *always* there, so often we act and think and behave and speak as if he were not. We fight, we argue, we laugh; we play games, watch movies, make love, and do just about everything without even thinking about the implication that *God is in the room*.

Even though we pray before our common meals, it amazes me how quickly I can slip back into thinking and acting as if the word *Amen* is a kind of curtain that I pull down in front of heaven. I've said my obligatory piece, and now I can carry on as if God has passed over us rather than taken up residence among us.

Think of how differently we might treat our children in those frustrating moments if we responded to them with the knowledge that God is in the room. If we truly believed that the God who designed them and who is passionate about their welfare was literally looking over our shoulders, might we be a little more patient, a little more understanding?

Think of how you might talk with each other, play games together, support each other, and encourage each other differently—perhaps

much better—if, as you did it all, you consciously remembered that God is in the room. Our casual compliance with sin is often as much a forgetfulness of God as it is rebellion against God.

It's such a simple notion, but it can be so revolutionary: *God is in the room!*

This is the straightforward message of a seventeenth-century monk named Brother Lawrence. In the midst of a busy life, Brother Lawrence reevaluated his priorities and decided that, more than anything else in the world, he wanted to practice the presence of God. At first, he found it a difficult thing to do, though with practice “[God’s] love brings us to it without any difficulty.”¹ This was no legalistic exercise, but one born in relational love. “When [Brother Lawrence] had not thought of [God] for quite a while he did not let it bother him, but after having acknowledged his wretchedness to God, he returned to Him with even more confidence for having suffered such misery in forgetting Him so.”²

Over time, “[Brother Lawrence] was more united to God in his ordinary activities than when he devoted himself to religious activities.”³ Indeed, he found that “the best way of reaching God was by doing ordinary tasks . . . entirely for the love of God.”⁴ In Brother Lawrence’s mind, prayer was not quantifiably different than peeling potatoes: “It was a great delusion to think that time set aside for prayer should be different from other times.”⁵

Such an attitude infuses the mundane with the profound: “We should not weary of doing little things for the love of God who looks not at the grandeur of these actions but rather at the love with which they are performed.”⁶ Imagine how such an attitude could transform doing the dishes, driving the daily commute to work, taking care of the laundry, putting up with a boring or stressful job, or sitting through yet another soccer tournament.

Brother Lawrence’s goal in life was brilliantly simple: to become the most perfect adorer (and, I might add, *rememberer*) of God he could. But once again, he found it more a matter of delight than obligation: “We are to be pitied for our willingness to be satisfied with so little. God has infinite treasures to give us and still we are satisfied with a brief passing moment of piety.”⁷ Brother Lawrence discovered that “there is no mode of life in the world more pleasing and more full of delight than continual conversation with God.”⁸ It is for this

1: God Is in the Room

reason that Brother Lawrence once said, “If I were a preacher, I would preach nothing else but the practice of the presence of God.”⁹

Though Brother Lawrence didn’t use these terms, he certainly would agree with the truth: God is in the room.

Tell it to yourself, every morning, every noontime, every evening: God is in the room.

Tell it to each other, every time you’re tempted to yell, or criticize, or ridicule, or even ignore each other: God is in the room.

Tell it to your children, throughout the day: God is in the room.

Let’s keep telling it to ourselves and to each other until we practice it and live it, until we live and breathe with the blessed remembrance: God is in the room.

God is in the room.

The Right Person for the Job

*But now, this is what the LORD says—
 he who created you, O Jacob,
 he who formed you, O Israel:
 “Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
 I have summoned you by name; you are mine.”*

Isaiah 43:1



If you were to ask most seminary professors to name the top ten preachers of all time, on the vast majority of those lists—if not on *all*—would undoubtedly fall the name Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834–1892), the celebrated Baptist often referred to as the “prince of preachers.” His sermons became so popular his church had to build a tabernacle that could seat the six thousand people who wanted to hear him, and many leading newspapers around the world (Spurgeon ministered in London) printed weekly transcripts of his messages.

And yet in one sermon Spurgeon made an astonishing confession: “I have been lamenting my unfitness for my work.”¹⁰

Who could imagine that Spurgeon, one of the most successful ever at his position, could feel inadequate for a task at which he clearly excelled?

And yet I meet many involved and capable parents who feel the same way. “Maybe,” they think, “I’m just not up to the task. Parenting asks of me skills and wisdom and energy I just don’t possess.”

Have you ever been there?

The Great Discourager, Satan, has a way of distracting us with pernicious questions: “Who are *you* to raise a child? What makes you think that *you*, of all people, can be a parent? These children would be better off without you!”

Spurgeon found hope in Isaiah 43:1: “But now, this is what the LORD says—he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: ‘Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.’”

Spurgeon explains, “I said to myself, ‘I am what God created me to be, and I am what He formed me to be. Therefore, I must, after all, be the right man for the place in which He has put me.’”¹¹

God not only created you; he created your children. And he chose to place those children in *your* home. To doubt any of this amounts to nothing less than questioning the sovereignty of God. Do you think God doesn’t care for your children? Do you imagine your son or daughter to be a mere afterthought who somehow escaped God’s attention? Not a chance! God designed your children, and he placed them in your care.

To win a war, you need to know not only your objective but also your enemy. The ancients didn’t shy away from talking about Satan—as we often do today—and they knew his tactics, chief among them being discouragement. If Satan can’t entice us to neglect our duties, he’ll work overtime to *discourage* us in them.

How do we fight parental discouragement, the feeling that we’re just not up to the task? Spurgeon notes that we gain hope from our *redemption*.

The Lord seems to say to us, “What I have done before, I will do again. I have redeemed you, and I will still redeem you. I have brought you from under the hand of the oppressor; I have delivered you from the tongue of the slanderer; I have borne you up under the load of poverty and sustained you under the pains of sickness; and I am able still to do the same. Why, then, do you fear? Why should you be afraid, since already I have again and again redeemed you? Take heart, and be confident, for even to old age and to death itself I will continue to be your strong Redeemer.”¹²

If your discouragement stems from *perplexity*—not knowing what to do—once again we find comfort in our Savior. Spurgeon says that if God could figure out how to be just and yet save sinners, if he could find a way to declare his war against evil while still forgiving sin, surely he can solve *our* challenges! There never was, nor

ever will be, a problem so perplexing that God's guidance can't see us through it.

If we worry about what we *lack*, financially or in personal abilities, we find comfort in God's promise: "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" (Romans 8:32).

Whatever our personal cause of discouragement, God has provided an ironclad cure. Charles Spurgeon observes, "With the bloodstain upon us, we may well cease to fear. . . . How can we be deserted in the hour of need? We have been bought with too great a price for our Redeemer to let us slip. Therefore, let us march on with confidence."¹³

The stakes you face as a parent are much too great to go unnoticed by a God who loves you—and your children—so much that he didn't spare his own Son in his zeal to redeem you. The God who did that is the God who watches over you now, the same God who inspired Spurgeon to offer this sermon more than a hundred years ago and who inspired you to pick up this book to hear these words anew.

You *are* the right person for the job, because God himself has assigned you the task. And he is committed to seeing you through.

In the end, that's all we need to know.