

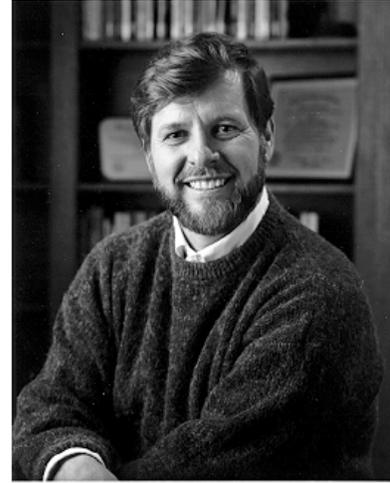
Growing Edges

April, 1994

In March I was with a small group of business leaders who were wrestling with the issues of faithfulness to Christ in the modern world—and especially the competitive, enterprising, business world in which these men and women invest so much of their time, energy, and creativity. To prepare for the weekend we had studied various writers—ancient and modern—in an attempt to gain some perspective on the issues. I was particularly intrigued by our response to the visions of two of the writers; the Puritan minister, John Cotton, and the Danish philosopher, Søren Kierkegaard.

The Audience of One

The Cotton essay describes that powerful Puritan vision of "Christian Calling" that embraces the whole of life. Out of this vision we gain a fuller understanding of vocation, industry, and work so that particular jobs or professions flow out of a far deeper wellspring than merely giftedness or economic advantage.



What moved me was how moved virtually every person in the group was by John Cotton's notion of "the audience of One." The idea is immensely simple: everything we do in life (and especially so in our chosen vocation) we do before God alone and to the glory of God alone and with a view to pleasing God alone—the audience of One. From this came his notion of "diligence in worldly businesses, and deadness to the world." The Bible, of course, literally bristles with this theme which is captured so well in St. Paul's famous words, "not with eye-service, as pleasers of humans, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord and not to human beings" (Eph. 6:6-7).

This idea gripped us all so forcefully because, number one, it is so obviously right and, number two, we so often fall short of fulfilling it, and, number three, it so clearly gives us a vision of what could be. How easy in a world of bosses and competition and bottom line concerns to be totally transfixed upon the opinions of others! And how freeing to be "brought off of human beings," as George Fox put it, and to look solely to God's approval!

The Knight of Faith

The second idea that captured our imagination is Kierkegaard's vision of "the knight of faith." Here is the person who receives meaning in life from God alone, and who "lives centered on the energies of his Maker." Here is the person who accepts whatever happens in this visible world without complaint, who lives life faithfully, and who faces death without a qualm. Here is the person for whom no task is so petty that it can threaten her sense of who she is, no mission so threatening as to be beyond her courage. Here is the person who is fully in the world on its terms, and yet fully beyond the world in his trust in the invisible dimension of the kingdom of God. Here is the person who is free to be open and generous to others, and who can enrich their lives without coercion or manipulation.

"The audience of One." "The knight of faith." Two compelling visions! Not easy visions—impossible, in fact, outside of the enablement of the Spirit of God. And most certainly we need the community of faith—the Church—to help us see the relevance of such impossible ideals and her wisdom and courage to help us convert them into reality.

Peace and joy,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard J. Foster". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Richard J. Foster

Growing Together

How to Start a Prayer Journal

Few things can nudge us toward God more than the keeping of a prayer journal. What is a "prayer journal"? Well, if prayer is the ongoing interaction we have with God, and a journal is a record of those experiences and thoughts we deem valuable, then a "prayer journal" preserves those interactions, events, and reflections from our external and internal worlds which track our personal history with God. It is an Ebenezer of sorts—a way of declaring "hitherto has the Lord helped us."

History is replete with the prayer journals of disciples of Jesus Christ. From Augustine's Confessions to Lady Julian's Showings to Pascal's Pensées to Woolman's Journal to Dag Hammarskjöld's Markings to Luci Shaw's God in the Dark, we are privileged to share in some of the finest of Christian devotion. These journals, of course, merely represent and illustrate the myriads upon myriads of unpublished prayer journals of followers of the Way throughout the centuries. It is a long and honored tradition.

Question: what do you do with a prayer journal?
Answer: almost anything you want. There is no right way or wrong way to go about a prayer journal. You are a unique individual before God with special gifts that only God can reveal and special needs that only God can satisfy. Together, you and God will find the prayer and journal pilgrimage that is best for you.

Having said this, it still might be useful to you if I made a few general comments. I encourage you, first of all, to comment freely on the events of your day. This differs from notations in a diary by its focus on why and wherefore rather than who or what. The external events are springboards for understanding God's deeper workings in the heart. Perhaps a particular encounter stirs up feelings of anger and defensiveness in you, or maybe pride and hope. Why? What is God teaching you through this experience? Remember, his is a scrutiny of love.

As you write, you will discover times when finding just the right word or phrase becomes important. You might begin with a prayer such as, "Jesus, teach me your love." But as the process of

prayer leads you deeper into the reality you are seeking, you will notice the prayer changing ever so slightly—and profoundly; "Lord, let me enter your love," or maybe "Jesus, let me receive your embrace."

So when seeking to experience prayer, I think it is wise to allow plenty of free space for crossing things out, changing direction, adding commentary, drawing arrows or other scribbles, and so forth. The same holds true if you are writing poetry—even more so. Time spent discovering the right word or phrase that gives voice to your heart cry is time never wasted. You may even want to set aside a page for a particular prayer or poem and date each time you return to it, making revisions, notes, or additional thoughts.

On the other hand, it is important not to get too tangled up in words. Sometimes it is best to let thoughts tumble forth unedited and uncensored. You may want to write by means of free association or stream of consciousness. (Sometimes I like to doodle!) Throughout, be open to Divine surprises—new ways of seeing, thinking, hearing, feeling.

At times, when I am praying for another person, I will place their name at the top of the page and then prayerfully begin to sketch out a picture. Perhaps a tree with roots going down deep and strong branches reaching skyward. Perhaps a rose opening up to the sunlight. Perhaps a wall of protection surrounding the person. Whatever. And my little picture becomes my prayer on behalf of another.

Above all, a prayer journal has a way of focusing, clarifying, keeping us honest. Self-centered prayers become manifestly so when committed to paper—even to us. Insights that are hazy figures on our horizon sometimes become crystal clear when written down. Vacillating indecision sometimes turns into marching orders.

So, I commend you to God as you begin a prayer journal. Who knows. Perhaps, just perhaps, through the process of prayer journal writing you will, like Moses, catch a glimpse of the backside of God. But even if you see nothing and hear nothing, you can still rest assured that you too are hidden in the cleft of the rock.

Richard J. Foster
(From *Coming Home*, HarperSanFrancisco, 1994.)

Going Deeper

In this issue we are featuring three journals—two quite old and famous (both things enhancing their value) and one quite contemporary yet in the same tradition as the others.

The Journal of George Fox chronicles the Quaker explosion in the seventeenth century. Fox's insight into his experience of intensively searching for peace with God after three years is typical: "And when all my hopes in them and in all men were gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could tell what to do, then, Oh then, I heard a voice which said, 'There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition,' and when I heard it my heart did leap for joy."

The Confessions of St. Augustine has to be among the earliest and certainly the most well known of the Christian journals. Augustine chronicles his life from childhood to adulthood, from born of flesh to born of God, from self-centered to Spirit-centered. It gives us the famous prayer, "O Lord, you made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in Thee."

The Genesee Diary is filled with insights from Henry Nouwen's seven months in a Trappist Monastery. It helps us answer those pestering (and terribly important) questions about meaning and brings a measure of peace to our restless selves.

As a special "thank you" to those who order all three books, we will send **free** John Ortberg's audiotape "The Illusion of the One-minute Christian." Delivered at the 1991 RENOVARÉ National Conference on Personal Spiritual Renewal, this talk confirms John's unique understanding of the life of the disciple.

P.S. If you need more help getting started on your spiritual journal, you may want to buy Luci Shaw's *Life Path: Personal and Spiritual Growth Through Journal Writing* or Ronald Klug's *How to Keep a Spiritual Journal*. Both are still in print and should be available—or can be ordered—at local Christian book stores.

Going Places

April 2-30—Trip to England, Sweden, and Germany.

May 9-19—Azusa Pacific University, Azusa, CA.

June 22—Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, Berkeley, CA.

June 24-25—Southwest Yearly Meeting, Whittier, CA.

July 1—MOVE RENOVARÉ OFFICES TO DENVER, CO.

Aug. 6-12—"Spiritual Life of the Family" Conference, Glen Eyrie Conference Center, P. O. Box 6000, Colorado Springs, CO, Contact person: Registrar at 1-800-944-4536 or fax 719-594-2244.

Aug. 22-26—"Mentors of Pray-ers" RENOVARÉ Retreat, Heartland Presbyterian Center, 16965 Northwest 45 Highway, Parkville, MO, Contact persons: Chuck or Joyce Olsen at 816-891-1078.

Sept. 9-10—RENOVARÉ Local Conference, Western Seminary, 5511 SE Hawthorne Blvd., Portland, OR, Contact persons: James DeYoung or Sara Hurty at 503-233-8561.

Sept. 12-14—"Spiritual Formation of the Christian Leader" RENOVARÉ Retreat, Glen Eyrie Conference Center, P. O. Box 6000, Colorado Springs, CO, Contact person: Registrar at 1-800-944-4536 or fax 719-594-2244.

Sept. 23-24—RENOVARÉ Local Conference, Faith United Church of Christ, 3030 175th Street, Hammond, IN, Contact person: Doyll Andrews at 219-845-2288

Growing Pains

There has been some confusion surrounding the radio spots we are airing on the Morningstar Network. We thought each spot would be broadcast over the satellite four times a day with each station obligated to carry it once. In fact, each spot is being broadcast a total of eight times over two days. We hope this hasn't caused any inconvenience or disappointment.

Knowing that it is impossible to see personally all of our friends and co-workers before we move to Colorado, we hope you can join us for a time of celebration and appreciation.