

Winter, 2001

Advisory Board

We are fortunate to have people who offer such wisdom and experience serving on our advisory board.

Brennan Manning is an author, speaker and close personal friend of Fil's. He makes his home in New Orleans.

His most recent book, [*Ruthless Trust: The Ragamuffin's Path to God*](#) is well worth reading. Through his rich stories and deep insights we are shown how true and radical trust can transform our lives.

Reflections on Prayer

Just a few months ago I spoke on the topic of prayer to a group of folks in downtown Winston-Salem, NC. It happened to be the same night of the Presidential Debate at Wake Forest University. While I was observing the incredible security measures taken to protect these two men from those who might wish to encounter them, I could not help but think about our unlimited access to God. Not only is God willing for us to come into His presence, but also actually beckons, woos, and urges us to come.

Yet, in spite of God's generosity, openness, and availability, why do you suppose most of us live with more disappointment, frustration, and embarrassment about our prayer than any other aspect of our relationship with God? Perhaps it would be helpful to consider a few basic questions about prayer.

What Is Prayer?

Prayer is the easiest and the hardest, the simplest and the most profound, the weakest and the most powerful, of all things we attempt on our journey with God. Augustine said, "True, whole prayer is nothing but love." I have found it to be more a way of

being with God than a way of doing things for God. One of the early Fathers of the Church, Clement of Alexandria said that, "prayer is keeping company with God."

Who Is the God to Whom We Pray?

More than anything, our view of God affects both the sincerity and frequency of our prayer. Nothing will encourage the kind of prayer our hearts yearn for more than a proper view of God. When our hearts and minds have been seized by God's indescribable affection for us, a life of prayer is born. Reflecting on God's tenderness and compassion always holds the potential for leading us to prayer.

How Are We to Pray?

When I reflect on books I have read, sermons I have listened to, and workshops I have attended on prayer, the single most helpful counsel I have ever received is simply: **PRAY AS YOU CAN, NOT AS YOU CANNOT.** Perhaps we are most wise when we pay attention to what has worked for us in the past. As we reflect on our life with God and those meaningful encounters we have enjoyed; are there things about those experiences that should be noted? Thomas Merton offered this wisdom: "Many poets are not poets for the same reason many religious men and women are not saints. They never succeed in being themselves. They wear out their minds and bodies in a hopeless endeavor to write someone else's poems or possess someone else's spirituality."

For years I knew I needed a regular exercise plan and I tried desperately to find one I could remain faithful to. The exercise I continued to fall back on was running, although I hated to run. Then one day I read an article that suggested there could be the same benefit in walking. Finally I swallowed my macho pride and began walking

and to my surprise discovered, I love to walk. It is my best way to exercise.

Regardless of the form we choose, we learn to pray best by simply praying. If you have ever learned how to speak a foreign language you know that you learn it best when you are actually speaking it. Picasso said, "Painting cannot be taught, it can only be found." There is no 'rule of thumb' when praying for the same reason that every thumbprint is different and distinct. In the final analysis, there are as many ways to pray as there are moments in the day.

Do not be discouraged when learning to pray. Although you meditate, try your hardest and shed tears, you cannot make this water flow. God alone gives it to whomever He chooses and often when one is least thinking about it. Wait on the Lord; persist in your prayer without thought of return. Prayer is performed only for the glory of God; God who is wise and powerful and knows what is best for you.

Teresa of Avila

Come Visit Us on the World Wide Web

We hope that friends of Journey Resources feel very much a part of things. One friend whose gifts and talents have helped is [Mark VanOsdell](#). Mark, a volunteer Young Life leader and Project Manager with SharpVista in Raleigh, NC is the designer of our web site. His love for Jesus, passion for helping, and belief in the work of Journey Resources all came together in this project. Without Mark, our web site would be just a dream. With him, the dream became a reality. Be sure to check out www.journeyresources.org. Thanks Mark, we are grateful.

Further reading about prayer:

[Living Prayer](#), by Robert Benson

Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home, by Richard J. Foster

Letters To Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer, by C. S. Lewis

A Testament of Devotion, by Thomas Kelly

Experiencing God Through Prayer, by Madame Guyon

Making All Things New: An Invitation To The Spiritual Life, by Henri Nouwen

The Way of the Heart: Desert Spirituality and Contemporary Ministry, by Henri Nouwen

A Diary of Private Prayer, by John Baillie

Answering God, by Eugene Peterson

The Practice of the Presence of God, Brother Lawrence

Life Together, Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Generous Response to Request for Financial Support

Journey Resources has been a dream come true for Fil and those who believe in his unique gifts, faithfulness to God, and calling to serve. The gifts and pledges that have been offered are a tremendous source of confirmation and encouragement.

Journey Resources anticipates operating on a \$120,000 budget in 2001. Fil is committed to generating 50 percent of that amount through speaking engagements, retreats, and other Journey Resources activities. The Journey Resources board is committed to raising the other 50 percent.

We are still in need of additional gifts and pledges. If you have not yet made a pledge, would you consider pledging financially toward the work of Journey Resources? Your pledge would be gratefully appreciated. No level of support is small enough to be considered insignificant. Gifts of cash or property, such as appreciated stocks, are tax deductible. We welcome your [inquiries](#).

Fil's Schedule:

January

5-7 Speaking at Carolina's Regional Young Life Leader Retreat at Windy Gap

12-14 Speaking at Greensboro Young Life's Leader Retreat at Carolina Beach, NC

21 Preaching at Grace Community Church, Greensboro, NC

22-24 Directing silent retreat for a group of youth workers from Knoxville, TN at Living Waters Retreat Center, Maggie Valley, NC

26-28 Speaking at Oklahoma Regional Young Life Leader Retreat, Tulsa, OK

February

3 Directing Raleigh Young Life Committee Retreat at Lake Gaston, NC

16-18 Directing silent retreat for high school students from [Cedar Springs Church](#), Knoxville, TN

March

2-4 Personal retreat with Robert Benson in Townsend, TN

25 Preaching at Friendly Hills Presbyterian Church, Greensboro, NC

A Note From Fil

I hope you have enjoyed receiving Journey Resources second newsletter. Our plan is to communicate with you once each quarter. We hope you will look forward to hearing from us and will find the information helpful to you as you continue on your own journey with God. We would also love to hear from you, so please keep in touch.

On a more personal note, may I ask you to please pray for my family, this ministry, and me? In addition, would you help us by making Journey Resources known to your church and others who might benefit from our ministry?

Finally, on a much more personal note, please be praying for me as I undertake the writing of a book. I have lived with the desire to write about my journey of faith for a couple of years and sense that now is the time. We have already had very meaningful dialogue with a publisher. Your prayers are tremendously appreciated!