

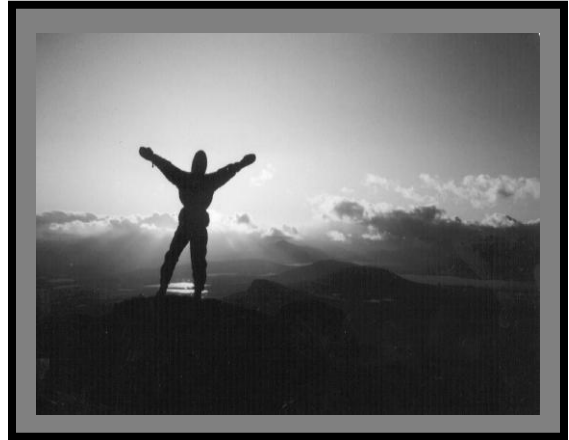
God's Love Revealed in My Life

Grace: *Ask for the grace of increased insight into God's loving presence throughout your life.*

Introduction:

Prayer during the Spiritual Exercises aims to increase awareness of a loving God Who centers affectionate attention upon you. Two simple points of the nature of love can help you to see God's love more clearly revealed in your life.

First, love wants to be revealed, expressed, shown, and received. If you love someone, sooner or later, you will want that person to know that he or she is loved. You might send a valentine and then a box of candy and then perhaps a phone call and then a meeting. All the time there is a creative on-going self revelation which presents the beloved with the opportunity to receive the affection or not. In short, the lover wants his or her love to be experienced and accepted.



Second, love must be expressed in words and gestures which the beloved can understand. The lover adapts the expression of love to the way the beloved can receive it. If you love a blind person, you do not speak to them in sign language. If you love a person who speaks a different language, you do not speak any other language to them except the language that they understand. Thus, the lover adapts to the person and personality of the beloved. So too, God adapts to you and will attempt to speak to you in ways that you understand.

In your reflections these next weeks, watch how this loving God reveals that love through gestures, symbols, feelings, keywords or phrases, and memories. Consider how God adapts His love to your ways of receiving that love. Ask for the grace to see how God actively courts you with a constant, gentle and yet persistent love. Begin by considering that you have been and actually are now being created. God does not create you and then leave you on the earth abandoned and alone. God tends to you as the beloved and labors upon and around you for your soul's purpose. God wants only this then, that you experience infinite love being revealed within your finite experiences, and your reception of that love in your life. Your having been created tells you how important you are in the eyes of God and your prayer helps you to see your value and significance in your own eyes. In so many ways God says, "Look around and see who I have said and I say that you are." You are in the presence of a God who can not keep love hidden and you are God's best work of art.

Reflect on the various ways that God shows you that God loves you. What thoughts and images come to mind as examples or proof of God's love for you? How have you responded to God's love? How close do you feel to God? Is there anything that keeps you from becoming closer to God? What prevents you from appreciating the gifts that God shares with you? What prevents you from seeing the gifts that God shares with you? Are there gifts that you have that you hide from others? What keeps you from being your genuine, true self? Read through the Scripture passages and the Reflection *I Remove My Masks Today*. Then, go back and re-read either the Scripture passage or the reflection depending on which one feels more comfortable. As you re-read the passage, pay attention to any words or phrases that seem to stand out to you and underline them. Ask God to help you to see where God has been present in your life. Write your reflections on the Spiritual Exercises Journal.

Psalm 139 - O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD. You hem me in— behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. 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. If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you. For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you. If only you would slay the wicked, O God! Away from me, you bloodthirsty men! They speak of you with evil intent; your adversaries misuse your name. Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD, and abhor those who rise up against you? I have nothing but hatred for them; I count them my enemies. Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Psalm 104 - Praise the LORD, my soul. LORD my God, you are very great; you are clothed with splendor and majesty. The LORD wraps himself in light as with a garment; he stretches out the heavens like a tent and lays the beams of his upper chambers on their waters. He makes the clouds his chariot and rides on the wings of the wind. He makes winds his messengers, flames of fire his servants. He set the earth on its foundations; it can never be moved. You covered it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains. But at your rebuke the waters fled, at the sound of your thunder they took to flight; they flowed over the mountains, they went down into the valleys, to the place you assigned for them. You set a boundary they cannot cross; never again will they cover the earth. He makes springs pour water into the ravines; it flows between the mountains. They give water to all the beasts of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst. The birds of the sky nest by the waters; they sing among the branches. He waters the mountains from his upper chambers; the land is satisfied by the fruit of his work. He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for people to cultivate - bringing forth food from the earth: wine that gladdens human hearts, oil to make their faces shine, and bread that sustains their hearts. The trees of the LORD are well watered, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted. There the birds make their nests; the stork has its home in the junipers. The high mountains belong to the wild goats; the crags are a refuge for the hyrax. He made the moon to mark the seasons, and the sun knows when to go down. You bring darkness, it becomes night, and all the beasts of the forest prowl. The lions roar for their prey and seek their food from God. The sun rises, and they steal away; they return and lie down in their dens. Then people go out to their work, to their labor until evening. How many are your works, LORD! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number — living things both large and small. There the ships go to and fro, and the leviathan, which you formed to frolic there. All creatures look to you to give them their food at the proper time. When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things. When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust. When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground. May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in his works — he who looks at the earth, and it trembles, who touches the mountains, and they smoke. I will sing to the LORD all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.

I Remove My Masks Today. I remove my masks today and I reveal my genuine self. I have appeared safely incognito before others--in many safe disguises. And I now see the danger in this, the risk that I will become disguised to myself, that I will camouflage myself with thin, pleasant smiles and superficial chatter. In doing this, I counterfeit my life, disguised both to others and to myself. I remove my masks today, for the masquerade saps me, consumes my energy, keeps me tense, guarded and apprehensive. I take a deep breath and take the plunge. I can be me, the real me, spontaneous without disguise, intimate without masks. I accept who I am: not a fixed, rigid, cardboard entity, but a person of many moods and emotions, a person of will and talent and energy, a person of integrity and flexibility. I can be myself today, freely, authentically and without pretense.

Lord, mighty God,
You are the Creator
of heaven and earth,
of all that is seen
and of all the unseen
tiny atoms, vast forces,
my own life world,
my own life,
each of my days.

Nothing in me
could demand of you
that you create me.

Everything that is you
demanded of you
that you create me,
for you are Love
and you wish to share
with those who
will love you.

I praise you, I thank you
for all that I am
and all that all of us
are and have.

Amen. -joe teflow, sj

In these or similar words ... After reading Psalm 139, the one gift most important to me that God has given me is life. Being brought into this world, as well as my parents, grandparents, etc. is the most generous thing God could've ever done. God "knows me", from Psalm 139 is important because it further proves that God loves me because he is always looking after me throughout my life. He did not just supervise me coming into this world, but also stays with me throughout my life, encourages me through my feelings to do good things, help people out, and discourages me to do bad things, he gives me feelings like "I shouldn't do this" and forces me to think out consequences and all the possible outcomes. He reminds me who is good and who to hangout with. God knows me so much that he even guides me through tough times, such as my parents divorce.

Practicing What You Preach ... To increase your ability to see God's love revealed in your life, consider writing a spiritual autobiography. For example, make a timeline of your life that includes those moments when you most strongly felt God's presence or the lack of God's presence. During the week, go back and reflect on those moments and try to re-experience some of those feelings.

