

# Maxim One: Seek to become Perfect Worshipers of God

These are reality and expressed in our faith.

1. God loves us. Period. We cannot avoid this.
2. God loves us always.

The situation we create means nothing.

3. God is stronger than our weaknesses.
4. Our doubt of God's love — or our feelings of unworthiness of that love which block the power and will of God — may weaken our faith, abbreviate our hope, and stifle our love faster than any sin we may commit.

This is why Brother Lawrence urges us to *“resolve firmly to overcome, by the grace of God (the love of God), all the difficulties found in the spiritual life.”* We

must overcome our own sin, as well as the residue and residual effects of our sin and doubt. If unchecked, our feelings of unworthiness of God's grace and life can block the very giving of gifts by God. And this does happen. It is good — necessary — to admit our unworthiness. It helps us recognize the power and love of God. But it must lead us to the acceptance of what God wants and desires to do in and through us.

Perhaps the greatest difficulty we confront in attaining what Brother Lawrence calls this first maxim is our own ability to accept that our lives are rooted in the love of God. Thomas Merton called this the Hidden Ground of Love. We are grounded in the life of God. Our baptism is to show this to us. Through Jesus Christ we are given an awareness of our sharing in the divine life of God.

It is this Hidden Ground of Love that is to reveal to us how we are united with all of creation since God is the Hidden Ground of Love in all of creation. Brother Lawrence awakens within us the reality that our goal is, therefore, to *“become perfect worshipers of God”*, that is, perfect in faith, hope, and love, so the ground of God's love is no longer hidden, but revealed, made known for us to live and share in this life, not just the life to come.



Patience is a virtue. So is perseverance. They are not listed by Brother Lawrence, a mystic who provides the Church with simple teachings of prayer that move us more and more into the awareness — and therefore —

life of God. He lists only the three great (cardinal) virtues of faith, hope, and love. God allows us sufficient intelligence to realize that patience and perseverance are essential to our watering the seeds of faith, hope and love, planted at baptism.

Combining these we can come up with a phrase that allows us to see the four maxims of Brother Lawrence as attainable goals in our own lives. Try **“Patient Endurance.”** By this phrase, we seek to live more patiently in a rat-race world. Endurance and perseverance are synonymous, indicating persistency and stamina needed — such as those qualities of an athlete with his mind set on winning an event.

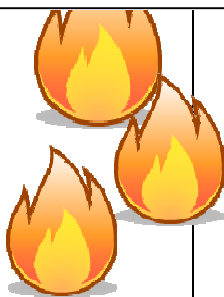
Patient Endurance enables us to move into a calmness of “waiting.” This is

not too distantly removed from what God does with us, patiently enduring the trials we place before him day in and day out through our own lack of love or acknowledgement of sin. The waiting is to have an effect

## GOD FIRST

Year Two, Part 6

*The Prayer of Awareness*



### The Spiritual Maxims of Brother Lawrence (First of Four)

*“All things are possible to one who believes, even more to one who hopes, and still more to one who loves; but all things are even more possible to one who practices these three virtues (faith, hope, and love) and perseveres in them. All who are baptized believers have made the first step on the road that leads to perfection, and will be perfect providing they persevere in the practice of the following guides to their conduct.”*

*“First. We must always keep our eyes on God and his glory in all we do, say or undertake. May the goal toward which we strive be to become perfect worshipers of God in this life, just as we hope to be throughout all eternity. Resolve firmly to overcome, by the grace of God, all the difficulties found in the spiritual life.”*

in our lives. Unlike God, who is perfect in his patience and in enduring much for our sake, including rejection, apathy, and indifference, we tend not to be so patient, or enduring and persevering in our seeking the perfection of God in our lives.

Perhaps part of this is because the next key term given us by Brother Lawrence is **“Perfection.”** Usually we brush off the idea of perfection in our lives simply because we think it is impossible for us to achieve. This is where God’s patient endurance is most seen, patiently supplying us with the grace to see otherwise, and enduring (“putting up with”) our self-doubt, which can cripple us to the point that we cannot understand or accept all that God is about and all that God gives. The lack of faith in what God can do — does today — can separate us from the love of God.

St. Paul in his letter to the Romans ((8:31b-35) asks, “What will separate us from the love of Christ? ...nothing can separate us from the love of God.” We cannot separate ourselves from God loving us, God’s presence in our lives. We can ignore it, disregard it, and refuse it. Our lack of faith, lack of living faith-filled lives, will keep us from the awareness of God’s presence and our rootedness in the Hidden Ground of God’s love. But God does not undo what was done. God does not take back what was given.

St. Francis of Assisi helps us with this in his marvelous writings. By recognizing all of creation in terms of “Brother” or “Sister”, St. Francis recognized that all creation is linked together in, and through, and with the Creator, the Hidden Ground of God’s love. In our becoming aware of our responsibility for each other, for nature and every created animal and plant, and for the environment, we become aware of the God who is revealed in all of this. God is the God of life. And all of the above has as its basis, the Hidden Ground of God’s love.

We are perfected in the perfecting our response to all of creation since God is to be found, revealed in it.

So Brother Lawrence’s maxim, his encouragement, is valid. And it is attainable. God provides everything for this purpose.

“Thank you God for making known your presence to me.”  
“You are here. Praise you Lord God.”  
“Bless your name, O God, for the beauty you show at this moment.”

