

"To be continually in communion with God does not mean thinking about God in contrast to thinking about other things, nor does it mean spending time with God instead of spending time with other people. As soon as we begin to divide off our thoughts, we separate God from our daily life. At that point God is allocated to a pious little niche in some corner of our lives where we only think pious thoughts and experience pious feelings.

Although it is important and even indispensable for our spiritual lives to set apart time for God and God alone, our prayer can only become unceasing communion when all our thoughts---beautiful or ugly, high or low, proud or shameful, sorrowful or joyful--- can be thought in the presence of the One who dwells in us and surrounds us. By trying to do this, our unceasing thinking is converted into unceasing prayer moving us from a self-centered monologue to a God-centered dialogue.

To do this we want to convert our thoughts into conversation. The main question, therefore, is not so much what we think, but to whom we present our thoughts, because to pray unceasingly means to think and live in the presence of Love. To pray unceasingly is to channel our thoughts out of their fearful isolation into a fearless conversation with God...." (Henri J. M. Nouwen)

I want to use this reflection to introduce you to a few resources that have been very helpful to me over the past year. I feel the need for a variety of sources to keep me listening to God speaking through scripture and encouraged in personal prayer.

I came across the above Nouwen quote on the Church of the Savior blog, Inward/outward.org I have usually found their brief daily offerings an encouragement to my spiritual life, especially my prayer life. In these pages I have often quoted from [The Daily Reader for Contemplative Living - Excerpts From the Works of Father Thomas Keating](#), Compiled by Stephanie Iachetta, Continuum, 2006. These short excerpts, combined with scripture passages, help the beginner or the experienced practitioner learn centering prayer, other forms of contemplative prayer and praying scripture (lectio divina).

Two excellent adaptations which make the Psalms more accessible for praying are:

[A Book of Psalms Selected & Adapted from the Hebrew](#), Stephen Mitchell, Harper Collins, 1993

[Psalms For praying, An invitation to Wholeness](#), Nan C. Merrill, Continuum, 2005

Nan Merrill writes in her Preface that her psalms are not "meant to replace the well-loved, still meaningful, and historically important Psalms of the Hebrew Scriptures. May [they] stand as companion[s], [create] a dialogue, if you will, of one age speaking with a later age. May [they] serve as an invitation to listen to the Voice of Silence that speaks within your own soul". Both of these adaptations have helped me to listen to that Voice with new ears and a responsive heart!

Here's how Nan translates the beginning of Psalm 16:

"Remain ever before me, O Living Presence, for in You am I safe.

You are my Beloved; in You I can do all things.

I look to those who are at one with You and learn from them of your ways;

My delight increases each time I sense your presence within me!

Songs of praise well up from my heart!"

I trust you will find these resources as useful as I have as you engage in unceasing communion with our loving God.

Under God's Mercy,

Howie