



Hope in the Present Moment | by Micky Wolf

“Find your delight in the LORD who will give you your heart's desire.”

[Psalm 37:4]

All rests now in the deep winter season. The quiet season. Even with an understanding of the cyclical realities of the seasons, both in nature and in being human, we may still wonder if life is really present amidst the monotones of our surroundings. *What is our purpose*, we may muse. Often, after an initial burst of New Year celebration enthusiasm we settle in, determined to ‘get through’ the remaining weeks until sunshine, warm breezes and clear blue skies birth a new springtime.

Having hope in the present moment is precious indeed. We may try to *think* hopeful thoughts but that usually doesn't sustain us for very long. Whether we are comfortable saying so or not, living a hope-filled life is best understood and appreciated when we *feel* it as well as think it.

The dictionary defines hope as “to cherish a desire with anticipation”. Seems simple enough—until we begin to understand embracing hope has a lot to do with

cherishing and desiring. To “cherish” is “to hold dear, feel or show affection for.”

Commonplace expressions of hope abound; someone may hope for a baby, another for a new car, still another will hope to take a long-postponed vacation. For some, hope is associated with very practical issues—a job or improved health.

While these hopes are meaningful in their own right, the more elusive hope is the hope that can be life-changing. Opening ourselves to this experience of hope can be transforming, moving us beyond wishing and hoping for the people or things that may make our lives more comfortable or enjoyable [not necessarily a bad thing] to living our lives with clarity and intention, even passion. This kind of hoping often surfaces from the deep, quietly held and hidden desires of our heart, the desires we may be only vaguely aware of at best, and at worst, have mostly forgotten as we allowed them to be buried under layers of life and daily living. Eventually, we barely know they ever existed in the first place.

Why is it important, especially in the quiet of the winter season, that we take



**BLESSINGS OF JOY, PEACE AND HOPE
HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

time to listen to our hearts for the whispers of our desires? Because in courageously persevering to discover that which we desire, hold dear, feel or show affection for, we will experience new truth about ourselves. We will see, maybe for the first time, our uniqueness as beings created in the image and likeness of God. We will also have a clearer sense of our mission and purpose in life.

What are the desires of your heart? What do you cherish? May we savor the time of this season to surrender our hearts in a felt experience of hope that will transform us deep beneath the surface of our being into the new life of the springtime that is to come. ■

TO PONDER...

*Definition of living the affirming life:
“Being the whole person God created me to be...”*

Am I living each moment?

Is life an interesting adventure or more mundane and routine?

*The traveler sees what he sees, the tourist sees what he has come to see.
[G. K. Chesterton]*



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"A person with a clear purpose will make progress on even the toughest road. A person with no purpose will make no progress on even the smoothest road." [Thomas Carlyle]

Heart, Mind & Prayer by Gerald May

Sometimes, instead of praying, I find myself thinking about praying; evaluating how I'm praying, figuring out what is proper or most effective. While these mental gymnastics may be well intentioned, and in fact have some real value as reflections before or after prayer, their effect during prayer is to keep me from really praying. They keep me in the mind and out of the heart.

As long as attention resides solely in the mind, we may spend our time producing scenes in which images of ourselves pray to images of God. This can become very effortful and can lead to a kind of "pretending" at prayer. Real prayer requires at least an attempt to leave such mental struggles and allow our attention to sink deeply, simply, and nakedly into the heart. Bringing attention to the heart is not a complicated process, but it does take real intention and courage. It involves a gentle, steady and wakeful willingness to let ourselves be just who we are before God and to let God be just how God will be within us. This demands no special generation of images. Nothing need be contrived or censored. It is a

disarmingly simple matter of relaxing and allowing whatever we really feel, perceive, want or fear to surface as it will. It is seldom easy and sometimes impossible to be successful at this, but the attempt needs to be made.

Courage is necessary because what we experience at this heart level may be so painful, boring, frightening, or beautiful we can hardly bear it, and the deeper perceptions of "me" and God that emerge may be threateningly unlike our usual mental images. To remain in the heart and permit such a fierce and simple honesty is the real work of prayer.

In my own heart-experience I often feel child-like, tender and dependent; and the God-presence that meets my heart may be so overwhelmingly loving that I feel I simply must escape. At other times, the hopes and fears of my heart just seem to lie there in emptiness, with no sense at all of God's response. Then, too, I want to escape, back to mind-images where I can make something happen.

It takes a strong commitment to try to remain in the heart regardless of what may come, but with time and grace, one's trust in the open mystery of God and

self can grow into an ever deepening, heartfelt prayer.

As I reflect upon my own history of prayer and meditation, I can identify two parallel but very different patterns of growth. On the surface are mental concepts and images of self, world and God that have evolved over the years. These are more theologically and psychologically mature than they used to be, and they are valuable. But somewhere nearer my heart, another evolution has been taking place. Here there is a little child, a child without concept; a child who is growing in trust and hope and love, but who in some way will forever remain a child. Here also is a growing sense of God, a God beyond image yet palpable, intimate, and inexpressibly loving. Perhaps in true maturity these growing paths of mind and heart become one. I don't know. But it does seem that if our hearts can be given attention in prayer, then our minds can find their home. ■

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