Love does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.
Brother Lawrence

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1 Corinthians 13:4b “Love does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.”



Imagine yourself in a Carmelite monastery in seventeenth-century Paris. You are standing in the monastery kitchen with monks busily working. The room is warm. Pots and pans clatter against one another. There is food to prepare, dishes to wash, vegetables to chop and work that must be done again tomorrow.

And among the men working there is Brother Lawrence. As a young man, he had been a soldier, but he was wounded during the Thirty Years’ War and was left with a lasting disability. After working as a servant, he entered a Carmelite monastery in Paris. He was not a priest or a famous preacher. He was a lay brother, and much of his working life was spent in the kitchen preparing food and serving the other brothers. Later, he repaired their sandals and carried out other mundane duties.

Imagine watching him go about his day. Some tasks may be more pleasant than others, but all are necessary. There is no applause, no great position to aspire to, and little reason for anyone outside the monastery to know his name. Brother Lawrence came to believe that even the most ordinary work could be done out of love for God.

Reflective questions — Have you ever envied someone else’s gifts or opportunities? Have you ever felt that your work didn’t matter, yet everyone else’s contribution is more important? Have you ever felt you needed to brag about your efforts or no one will notice?

Reflective pause — 30 seconds

Brother Lawrence sought to practise the presence of God in everything he did. Prayer was not confined to the chapel. He spoke about turning towards God in the middle of ordinary life: while working, serving others or attending to the simplest responsibilities. As Brother Lawrence grew older, people began to seek his wisdom. They were drawn to his understanding of how a person might live continuously in the presence of God during ordinary life.

His conversations and letters were collected, and after his death in 1691, they were published in a book known as *The Practice of the Presence of God*. It is striking that a man who had spent so much of his life in humble service should leave behind words that would encourage Christians for generations. He had not sought fame, yet his wisdom endured beyond his lifetime.

This brings us back to Paul’s words: Love does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. Brother Lawrence’s life reminds us that love is not measured by how impressive our actions appear to others. Sometimes it is found in the work nobody notices, the service nobody applauds and the kindness that asks for nothing in return.

Reflective question — Where might you practise this kind of love? Is there a task you could do without seeking recognition? Is there a quiet act of service you could offer not only to help another person, but draw closer to God?

Reflective pause — 30 seconds

Let Brother Lawrence’s example inspire us. May we learn to serve without needing recognition, to rejoice in the gifts of others, and to make even the ordinary moments of our lives an offering of love to God and to those around us.