

A Long, Loving Look at My Life - A Contemplative Meditation

by [Alexander Garoutte](#)

Walter Burghardt, SJ famously said that contemplation is "a long, loving look at the real." In this meditation I take a long, loving look at what's most real to me: my life. I reflect on various stages of my life to remember the ways that God has loved me. I pray that I am given the grace to make love more central to my life and my daily action.

I begin with my birth. I think of the way that my mother gave me life. I imagine her eating, taking in nutrients so that I may grow within her womb. I gratefully reflect on the labor that she went through so that I may live. Without her pains I would not be here today. I thank God for her gift.

I recall my earliest years. Though I perhaps do not remember them, I picture what it looked like as I struggled to scoot, crawl, walk, and run. As if I were playing a video of those years I consider what it sounded like when my mouth formed my first sounds and words. Who spoke to me and taught me these words? Who helped me to stand? Who fed me when I could not feed myself yet? I take a moment to thank God for all of these moments of growth and for those who made them possible.

I look at my years from ages five to ten. I think about the friends that surrounded me. I recall what it was like to learn to read, or to play sports, to learn about what I was good at. I remember how my head was filled with knowledge about the world when my curiosity was at its peak. I step back to look upon these people and these moments – I thank God for them.

I remember what it was like to work through my teenage years. Though they might have been characterized by awkwardness, challenges, and tough times, I think of the good times. Perhaps it was then that I found what I was truly passionate about. Maybe I experienced my first kiss. Where did I find a community or friends who accepted and appreciated me? I sit with these memories in gratitude.

I look at what it was like to enter into adulthood. I remember the joy (and challenges) of independence from my parents. Though perhaps a messy time of life, I think about how I worked to know myself and my identity more clearly than at any other time before. I appreciate the experiences that brought me to life and

reminded me of my value. I step back to appreciate all that God has given me during this time.

I recall what it has been like to set out into the world and to be my most authentic self. Perhaps I found myself married and with children. Maybe they have grown to have children of their own. I think of the ways that I have helped others to see their goodness and their own belovedness. I reflect on how God has continued to love me into my existence. I take some time to thank God for these moments.

Now, I put all these memories together like a slideshow of my life. As I watch it unfold, I remember that all of this has come from God. God's love, often made palpable through those around me, has made this life possible. Without God's continuous love, I would not have any of these abilities, memories, skills, or gifts. All that I have has been given to me freely. I am God's beloved.

What feelings does this stir up in me? Perhaps gratitude and thankfulness to God? Joy? Love?

As I spend time reflecting on how God has loved me so deeply throughout my life, I think of how I want others to know this love for themselves.

Where is God leading me on this mission of love?

Whom am I being called to love more deeply?

How am I being called to love more deeply?

When I am done, I read Psalm 139 and remember that God continues to form me and create me moment by moment. His desire is that I grow in His love to become more truly the person He created me to be.

I thank God for this time in prayer and for what God has inspired within me.