



## FRANCOIS FENELON 1651 – 1715

Rather than dwell on the biography of Francois Fenelon, a French Roman Catholic archbishop, theologian, poet and writer who was born in 1651, suffice it to say that he was a favorite of the wife of King Louis XIV, and an educator of the young Duke of Burgundy, for whom he wrote a novel titled (in English) *The Adventures of Telemachus, son of Ulysses*, and a missionary to the Huguenots. He was not always a favorite at court, but his writings still have an important influence on people today.

W. Fred Smith is a noted Dallas Texas businessman and one of this country's most notable motivational speakers. He cites Francois Fenelon as one of his mentors and says that from Fenelon's writings he has learned these eight things:

1. The Presence precedes the pain. Fenelon writes, "Live your daily life in the presence of God. He will give you all that you need. God's glory and His purpose are the end of all things. You will find happiness and salvation there but not as an end in itself. It is all for God."
2. Self-love is subtle. Fenelon writes, "Selfishly loving yourself shunts your spirit. You put yourself in a straitjacket when you are enclosed in self . . . be humble. Do not trust in the old nature."
3. Suffering is useful. Fenelon writes, "God never makes you suffer unnecessarily. He intends for your suffering to heal and purify you. The hand of God hurts you as little as it can. The yoke that God gives is easier to bear if you accept it without struggling to escape."
4. One test of relationship with God is peace. Fenelon writes, "The point of trusting God is not to do great things that you can feel good about, but to trust God from a place of deep weakness. If you are actually trusting God with something, you will not think about the matter any longer nor will you feel a lack of peace."
5. Silence brings blessing. Fenelon writes, "Silence encourages God's presence, prevents harsh words, and causes you to be less likely to say something you will regret. Out of the silence that you cultivate you will get strength to meet your needs."
6. Growth and change are the work of the cross. Fenelon writes, "I agonize and cry when the cross is working within me, but when it is over I look back in admiration for what God has accomplished."
7. The focused life is the simple life. Fenelon writes, "The desire to do a work for God is simple enough, but I greatly complicate it when I add the hidden agenda of wanting to be recognized and appreciated while doing it."
8. Give grace to yourself and others. Fenelon writes, "Do not be surprised to find yourself overly sensitive, impatient, proud, and self-willed. Realize that this is your natural disposition. Bear with yourself, but do not flatter yourself into thinking you are better than you are, but wait on God's timing to transform it. Stop at once when your activities become too hurried."