

## THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

Indeed if God is All and His Word to us is All, that must mean that He is the reality and controlling factor of every situation, religious or secular; and it is only for His glory and creative purpose that it exists. Therefore our favorite distinction between the spiritual life and the practical life is false. We cannot divide them. One affects the other all the time. Christ's whole ministry was an exhibition, first in one way then in another, of this mysterious truth.

*Evelyn Underhill the Spiritual Life*

He is the image of the invisible God, the first born over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

*Colossians 1:15-17*

If our practical life is centered on our own interests, cluttered up by possessions, distracted by ambitions, passions, wants and worries, beset by a sense of our own rights and importance, or anxieties for our own future, or longings for our own success, we need not expect that our spiritual life will be in contrast to all this.

*Evelyn Underhill the Spiritual Life*

Seek first his kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well.

*Matthew 6:33*

The only trouble is that in the spiritual life there are no tricks and no short cuts. Those who imagine that they can discover spiritual gimmicks and put them to work for themselves usually ignore God's will and His grace. One cannot begin to face the real difficulties in prayer and meditation unless one is perfectly content to be a beginner and really experience himself as one who knows little or nothing and has a desperate need to learn the bare rudiments. Those who think they "know" from the beginning will never, in fact, come to know anything.

*Thomas Merton Contemplative prayer*

We should not, however, judge the value of our meditation by how we feel. A hard and apparently fruitless meditation may in fact be much more valuable than one that is easy, happy, enlightened and apparently a big success. There is a movement of meditation expressing the basic "paschal" rhythm of the Christian life from death to life in Christ. Some prayer seasons are "death" a kind of descent into our own nothingness, recognition of helplessness, frustration, confusion, and ignorance. While other seasons result in great clarity.

*Thomas Merton Contemplative prayer*

You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your First Love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first.

*Revelation 2:4-5*