

Spiritual Practices for the Holistically Unitary Life

Meditate on God's greatness and goodness in the farthest reaches of the universe, in continuing creation, and in constant love for each of us. Then consider your own life as a big thing, related to all reality, to human need, and to God. Let your thoughts and feelings flow freely. Reflect on the meanings of this for the next steps you might take.

In comparison with a well-rounded, full unitary life, which areas of your life have been neglected or underdeveloped? Recall the two great commandments of Jesus (Mark 12:28-31). Plan what you will do about this. Express your dedication in prayer.

Write on separate cards or slips of paper your important identities or roles (as parent, son, consumer, citizen, secretary or whatever). Arrange the cards in order of their importance to you, with the most important identity on top of the stack. Reflecting on each identity in turn, beginning with the most important, imagine how you would feel about losing that role at death. After getting in touch with your feelings, drop each card onto a new stack. Then imagine that you have been given a brand new lease on life. Again pick up each identity card, beginning with the least important (which will now be on top of the stack) and note your feelings about resuming each of the identities. *What changes does this exercise suggest in the way you are now living?*

What is the strongest motive in your life? Think of specific illustrations. Do you cook because you want others to be healthy and happy or because you want to be told what a good cook you are? Do you pray in order to buy protection against earthly disaster and eternal bliss in a heavenly reward or to receive a demanding word from God? If there were a conflict between getting a higher salary to provide more for your family, and what you felt to be God's will in your vocation, what would you do? Read Matthew 6:31-33.

List some decisions or choices you have recently made. *Why did you make them? How should you change your basic commitments?*

As you move through coming days, enlarge your practice of the presence of God, making it more an experience of "getting it all together" than it has been in the past. If in your flashes of prayer or brief recollections of God you have most often thought, for example, of the grace and love of God, think also of God's judgment and power.

If your deliberate, repeated recalling of God has been chiefly a matter of thought, let it also become a response of feeling. As you sense the presence of God coming to you from a distant "out there," recognize it also as being "right here," within you and guiding all your relationships. See the consequences of living in the presence of God not only as worship, but also as a transformation of your total self, including action on great human issues and organized systems of society.

Deliberately practice this expanded awareness of the presence until it becomes an increasingly spontaneous and continuous sense of God, drawing your entire self into relationship with the whole of reality.

Note: In addition to the suggestions above, exercises in previous sections continue to make an important contribution to unitary living.