

# **The Elixir of Life (Spiritual Friendship)**

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## **PART ONE**

Teresa of Avila is one of the greatest masters of the spiritual life. Early on she did not have friends who shared her love of God and pursuit of holiness and she found it very difficult to make progress on her own. She writes: "A great evil it is for a soul to be alone in the midst of so many dangers. It seems to me that if I should have had someone to talk all this over with it would have helped me...For this reason I would counsel those who practice prayer to seek...friendship and association with other persons having the same interest... I believe that those who discuss the joys and trials they undergo will benefit themselves and those who hear them, and they will come away instructed; and even without understanding how, they will have instructed their friends." (The Book of Her Life, Chapter 7:20.)

Then she found a handful of friends who had her same goal of union with God and holiness. She made a priority to spend time with them talking about their spiritual journey and from that time she made great progress and the journey was way more enjoyable.

## **PART TWO**

What is Spiritual Friendship? Spiritual Friendship occurs when we find another person or a handful of people who share our love for God and want to grow in union with him. We love each other unconditionally because we think our friends make the world a better place just by their being. But we love this friend with a demanding love, meaning, we want them to reach all their potential for goodness and we are committed to helping them as they are committed to helping us in return.

## **PART THREE**

We prioritize spending time with our spiritual friends because we were made to engage and experience the reality of truth, beauty and goodness. The fullness of reality is God. We need not be limited by our own experiences. We can have the joy of a much richer experience of reality, and of God, by sharing it with others in friendship. We know the way to union with God and holiness is not easy. It is fraught with many dangers and difficulties coming from the world the flesh and the devil. This is why we need one another. By sharing life together and by our conversations, we can enrich each other with our virtues and stretch each other by our differences. We can encourage and challenge one another to persevere in our journey to God.

## **PART FOUR**

What should we do if we want to have spiritual friendships? The first and most important thing is to commit to friendship with Jesus through daily meditation and a resolution. Through the daily practice of meditating, or thinking about the Word of God, we spend time thinking about the highest thing in reality -which is our faith, and we spend time loving the highest good, -which is God. We end every meditation with a simple concrete resolution, -something to remember or do based on our meditation. This enables us to practice and grow in virtue each day. Daily meditation feeds us with the best part of reality, which then enables us to talk about it with our friends. A daily resolution helps us grow in virtue so we can help our friends grow in virtue as well.

## **PART FIVE**

Everyone needs a spiritual friend and better yet a small group of them. Take the initiative to invite others to share life with you regularly. It takes no extra time. Have a meal or a drink, take a walk, watch a game, go hunting or fishing or quilting. Just do what you normally do but do it with others.

Then have a good conversation with them. Talk about everything that is true, and beautiful and good.

Most importantly, talk about what you have been reflecting and thinking about in daily meditation!

Teresa of Avila was so deeply convinced she needed this kind of friendship and good conversation that she writes: "Of myself I know and say that if the Lord had not revealed this truth to me and given me the means by which I could ordinarily talk with persons who practice prayer, I, falling and rising, would have ended by throwing myself straight into hell.

### Reflection Questions

- What word or phrase resonates with you?
- What in this meditation relates to your personal life?
- What challenges you the most?