

The SEVEN Streams of Living Water, Richard Foster (Six Streams)

The Prayer-Filled Life (the contemplative tradition): our heart's steady attention on God

The Contemplative Tradition continually draws us into love for God, reminding us that the Christian life is less like a rule book and more like falling in love. It stresses the value of silence, solitude, and prayer as ways we engage with God's presence, whether we take a silent walk in the early morning, ride the bus to work, wash dishes while the kids nap, or even take a nap ourselves. As Teresa of Avila described, contemplation is "an intimate sharing between friends," in the time or manner that works best for you and God.

Put simply, the contemplative life is the steady gaze of the soul upon the God who loves us.

—Richard Foster, Streams of Living Water

(Additional quotations on this page from same source.)

The Virtuous Life (the holiness tradition): responding with integrity

The Holiness Tradition emphasizes the re-formation of our hearts so that we are able to respond appropriately to the challenges of life. The word, "holiness" has some negative connotations today, but the original Greek meaning of the word virtue is simply "to function well." Virtuous Life is not about rules or judgement, perfectionism, or some kind of merit gained by good deeds. It encourages us to the ultimate goal: not to "get us into heaven, but to get heaven into us." It is attentiveness to the source of our actions, to the condition and motives of the heart, and taking on new patterns of life that flow naturally from within.

We see Jesus consistently doing what needs to be done when it needs to be done. We see in him such deeply ingrained "holy habits" that he is always "reponse-able," always able to respond appropriately. This is purity of heart. This is the virtuous life.

The Spirit-Empowered Life (the charismatic tradition): fueling our lives from the presence and power of God

The Charismatic Tradition focuses on the power of God's Spirit moving in and through us. Just as a car requires fuel to run, and our bodies require food for survival, so our souls rely upon the Spirit of God for spiritual energy. Through the Spirit, we are able to do more than we could on our own steam, and these abilities not only remind us of God's presence, but equip us to build up our communities in love.

Frankly, there are no 'noncharismatic Christians' ... the Christian life is by definition a life in and through the Spirit.

The Compassionate Life (the social justice tradition): extending compassion in every sphere of life

The Social Justice Tradition expresses the themes of justice, compassion, and peace. It emphasizes wisdom and lovingkindness to bring relationships into harmony, unity, and balance, even within our relationship to nature. Compassionate Life takes place in all arenas of life, from personal to social to global. As with the other traditions, the actions

we take are not the end goal. True compassion is motivated by a genuine heart, is empowered by the love of God, and embraces the possibility of positive change. Love of God makes love of neighbor possible.

The Word-Centered Life (the evangelical tradition): living the life-giving message

The Evangelical Tradition encompasses much more than simply converting people. The evangel – the “good news” – is God’s great message to humanity: that all can be redeemed and restored to its intended design. This is the message embodied in Jesus himself, rooted in the word of God, and ultimately expressed through the lives of those who follow Christ. It is a living tale of grace spoken in and through word and action.

This faith stream addresses the crying need for people to see the good news lived and hear the good news proclaimed.

The Sacramental Life (the incarnation tradition): Encountering the invisible God in the visible world

The Incarnational Tradition focuses on the relationship between the invisible spirit and physical reality, helping us to see God’s divine presence in the material world in which we live. God manifests himself in his creation, even in the midst of mundane activities, whenever and wherever we acknowledge God.

Far from being evil, the physical is meant to be inhabited by the spiritual.

The Surrendered Life (the *Abba*, Father tradition): Knowing God as *Abba*, Father

The *Abba*, Father, or surrendered life, knows God as an abundant Provider, steadfast in love, and reliable with His Word. It is the only stream in the life of Jesus as revealed in the New Testament that is not reflected in a church tradition. Presbyterians focus on the Compassionate life (Social Justice Tradition); Independents focus on the Word-centered Life (Evangelical Tradition); the Roman Catholics focus on the Incarnational Tradition (sacramental life); Nazarenes focus on the Holiness Tradition (the virtuous life); Pentecostals focus on the Charismatic Tradition (the spirit-empowered life); there are orders in the Roman Church and some independent churches that focus on the Contemplative Tradition (the prayer-filled life).