

## Life: Structure & Suggestions

	Structure	Suggestions for more thoughtful reading
<p><b>Section 1</b> Chs.1-9</p> <p>Portrait &amp; Path of Conversion</p> <p>Sins, Graces, Vocation</p>	<p>Teresa details an autobiographical portrait of her 40 years of existence. It covers the period from <b>childhood</b> through the <b>beginning of her mystical experience</b>. Teresa doubles as both the <b>narrator</b> and the <b>character</b>. The narrator becomes Teresa the <b>writer</b>, while the character is the <b>actor</b> of the events. The reader is absorbed in a struggle between God and herself until her <b>conversion before the wounded Christ</b> the <b>key</b> event in her life. (1554, 5D)</p>	<p>Teresa talks to us about herself honestly about: her family, her childhood, her adolescence, her youth, her vocation, her encounter with Carmelite life, etc. But above all, St Teresa talks to us about God; lowering Himself to share his life and to transform hers;</p> <p>Based on her personal experiences, Teresa teaches us that God is a positive presence, who improves an individual, increases his good desires and pardons his faults;</p> <p>To clearly demonstrate the greatness of God and His never-ending desire to transform a person, Teresa presents herself as someone who was ungrateful and who resisted God's divine action;</p> <p>St. Teresa attempts to point out the incomparable initiative of God and to help us see that His action is independent of our worth, though He may appreciate our good intentions, and only and exclusively granted out of His mercy.</p>
<p><b>Section 2</b> Chs.10-22</p> <p>Treatise on the Different Degrees of Prayer</p>	<p>Following chapter 10, the <b>transition chapter</b>, Teresa outlines the <b>4 degrees of interior prayer</b> using an <b>allegory</b> (11-22): the <b>4 ways to water the garden</b>: <b>Meditative</b> prayer (11-13); the <b>infused</b> prayer of recollection; the prayer of <b>quiet</b> (ch.14-15) and <b>sleep of the powers</b> (16-17); and finally, the prayer of <b>union</b> (18-21). Chapter 22 summarizes the <b>spiritual itinerary</b>. We can better understand the new life she experienced since she entered mystical life. She stresses the importance of the Humanity of Christ.</p>	<p>Mental prayer is the privileged meeting place between God and the human being. It is here where the miracle of transformation takes place; God sits down at table with the man and the woman or takes walks with them in order to communicate His nature to them;</p> <p>There is the expectation that there be a detached and loving attitude within the climate of mental prayer. Mental prayer is not a practice where we try and find ourselves or spiritual consolations; It is rather the door where God's action happens in His timeframe which is different from ours. It is here that He shows us His friendship and love by taking the reins of our lives.</p> <p>Jesus Christ in His Holy Humanity plays an irreplaceable role in this process. We are saved by Him and through Him God gives us the necessary graces to be transformed in His image. To abandon Him is to close the door on any sort of progress.</p>

<p><b>Section 3</b> Chs.23-31</p> <p>Mystical Life- Teresa's New Life</p>	<p>In chapters 23-31, Teresa picks back up telling the <b>story of her life</b>. There is <b>less distance</b> now between the narrator and the characters in the beginning. Teresa has used similar <b>expressions</b> and has had similar <b>experiences</b> to <b>St. Paul</b>: A new book is beginning, no, I mean a <b>new life</b>. What I spoke of at first was <b>my life</b>; the one I described later which outlines the different states of prayer is, if I am not mistaken, the <b>life of God within me</b> (L, 23,1).</p>	<p>God becomes Teresa's guide in the new life she is beginning. We are surprised to discover that God is as close, as loving, and as giving of constant graces to the people He loves;</p> <p>The graces Teresa received (visions, locutions, etc.) aren't the essential element in mystical life; What's <b>essential remains the teaching we receive and the deepening of communion with God</b> who is both near and loving;</p> <p>We will constantly see in Teresa the <b>fruits of mystical experience</b>: personal richness, moral transformation, increase in the love of God and neighbor, humility, the rejection of evil, etc.</p> <p>In conjunction with this rich panorama of multiple graces, appear <b>trials</b>, temptations, rejection, misunderstandings and hardships; <b>Perfection doesn't happen overnight</b>. It isn't a path without both <b>internal and external difficulties</b>; Watch out for discouragement. Don't get weary, hope in Christ, persevere in prayer and do what's necessary for each one to realize His desires.</p>
<p><b>Section 4</b> Chs.32-36</p> <p>Foundation of St. Joseph's Convent</p>	<p>Chapters 32-36; We go from the interior life to an external event; the <b>foundation of St. Joseph's of Avila</b>. According to the author the event and its chronology are the <b>fruit and the effect of her mystical experience</b> which had become as source of life for others. Her own salvation story becomes a part of the Story of Salvation. With the first nuns who followed her, St. Teresa's <b>goal</b> is to serve both Christ and the Church within the convent of St. Joseph's of Avila. The graces and blessings she receives are revealed not only as a <b>personal gift for her but for the entire Church</b> who will benefit too. 1562, 6D)</p>	<p>God doesn't give uniquely for one person's benefit; we are part of the human family and a part of the Church;</p> <p>We are in the middle of this community as a shining light, as a city on a hill, as yeast that ferments in a society that dares to turn from God.</p> <p>He leaves the sign of His hand in our history like a sign of salvation;</p> <p>For example, He nudged Teresa to found St. Joseph of Avila convent. In the same way God puts His hand on us to invite us to put aside personal projects and to embrace in His name what could appear to us to be incomprehensible.</p>

<p><b>Section 5</b> Chs.37-40</p> <p>Effects of Prayer</p>	<p>Chapters 37-40. Fr. Garcia de Toledo helped St. Teresa return to the autobiographical account of her life to complete this third installment of the autobiography that she was in the process of living. She once again takes up the telling of her interior experiences which brings her to discuss her present...rich in divine favors, lived out with an internal sense of security; a new serenity. In contrast with the fears and perplexities that she had previously gone through, we find a feeling of <b>serenity</b> and interior <b>security</b> which allow Teresa to relate her new experiences with absolute conviction.</p>	<p>As a community, we contemplate with Teresa God's marvels which continually allow for prayer, poverty and brotherhood;</p> <p>We look at our community, and we try to build it up according to Teresa's dream which became a reality with St. Joseph of Avila;</p> <p>The Madre invites us to hurry up and serve His Majesty and to let Him bring about in and by us the miracles that she related in the Book of her Life:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">‘This is the life that I live now, my lord and my father (Fr. Garcia de Toledo). Ask God yourself where He is calling you to Him and that He gives you the grace to serve Him.’</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(V 40, 23)</p>
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