

*The Cultivated Life: From
Ceaseless Striving to Receiving
Joy*

Available July 2015

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How to Live for God in a Circuslike Culture

Today's culture is nonstop and performance-driven. Our schedules are full, time feels short and the demands on our attention leave us wondering how we can live for God amid the daily bustle. In *The Cultivated Life*, spiritual director Susan Phillips answers this "how" question, offering specific practices that lead us into a new, cultivated way of living—even while immersed in our daily, circuslike reality.

Phillips contrasts life in the circus to life in a flourishing and well-tended garden. In the garden we find spiritual life and receive God's invitation to a relationship rooted in grace.

The Cultivated Life shows that to grow into this garden living requires both desire and discipline, as we cultivate our souls and reorient ourselves toward God through practices including:

- friendship
- listening
- sabbath keeping
- praying with Scripture

The Cultivated Life reveals that although these practices are countercultural in our age of distraction, they are the disciplines that allow us to flourish, bear fruit and live rooted in Christ. "The challenge is to choose and participate in our spiritual cultivation within a captivating circuslike culture," Phillips writes.

Phillips brings her personal and professional experiences and diverse insight to *The Cultivated Life*. She is executive director and professor of sociology and Christianity at New College Berkeley, where she previously served as academic dean. She is a sociologist and trained spiritual director who also serves as supervisor for spiritual directors and consultant for Christian organizations. She has authored several books, lectures internationally and leads retreats for churches and organizations.

"Susan Phillips can write this book because she lives it," said Mark Labberton, president of Fuller Theological Seminary. "For three decades and more, I have observed the choices she makes to cultivate life and this has been the hallmark of her story. This book is a deep and magnanimous invitation to live in such a way that the flourishing for which we are made can become our experience. Let the grounded welcome she extends and encourages lead us through the circus towards life itself."

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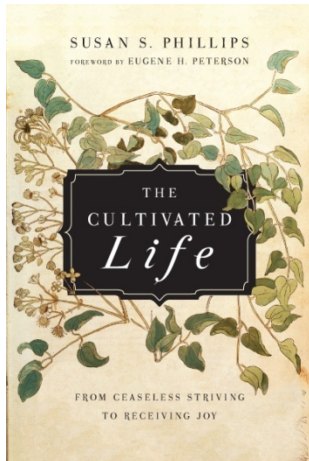
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The Cultivated Life: An Invitation to the “Flourishing for Which We are Made”

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—**Mark Labberton**, president of Fuller Theological Seminary

“Susan Phillips tells great stories and uses vivid word pictures. Her contrast between circus and garden reveals deep truths about the overstimulation in our daily lives and Jesus’ invitation to cultivate a restful and focused life rooted in him. Cultivation implies habits and discipline, and Susan winsomely invites us into new patterns of living. A garden implies lush green leaves and fruitful bounty, and Susan guides our paths into joy and rest. Come into the garden with Jesus and journey into abundant life.”

—**Lynne M. Baab**, author of *The Power of Listening* and *Sabbath Keeping*

“*The Cultivated Life* is filled with gifts of a generous, transparent spirit. Reading this insightful book and reflecting on its profound questions invite us to taste the life Susan Phillips lives. Every chapter is exquisitely crafted with real words rather than fast-food language. Borrowing Susan’s words, I longed to be marinated in the realities of the cultivated life until they became metabolized into my being. When I reached the end of *The Cultivated Life*, I returned to the beginning to soak in the words, insights and prayers that arose. Thank you, Susan, for giving us a glimpse of wholeness by offering gifts of spiritual direction through your writing.”

—**Jeannette A. Bakke**, author of *Holy Invitations*

“Susan Phillips’s *The Cultivated Life* is a remarkable work on many levels. Her insightful and sophisticated analysis is able to synthesize both the theoretical and practical in profound and compelling ways. Her skills as a creative theologian and biblical interpreter, a wise and insightful spiritual director, and one grounded in the common-sense particularities and complexities of human experience and history make her work an extraordinary contribution in so many arenas of pastoral and theological practice. . . . I recommend Susan Phillips’s book with great enthusiasm for all audiences—for all who are searching.”

—**James A. Donahue**, president, Saint Mary’s College of California

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