

# THE WAY

OF TRUST AND LOVE



Book by

**JACQUES PHILIPPE**

A Retreat Guided by

**ST. THERESE OF  
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“Instead of getting discouraged,  
I said to myself:  
‘God could not inspire us with desires  
that were unrealizable,  
so despite my littleness  
I can aspire to holiness.’”  
**St. Thérèse of Lisieux**

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# Opening Prayer:

Jesus, thank you for teaching me how to open my heart  
without reserve to the Holy Spirit.

I want to seek and trust the love of our good Father  
so that I may love as You love.

Help me to discover You  
in the joys and disappointments of my day.

Give me courage and an untroubled heart  
so I may radiate joy and kindness to all I meet.

Amen.

## **Introduction**

We don't often think about how revolutionary a person must be to become a saint. They identify and verbalize new ways to understand how we can and should relate to God and each other. We are familiar with popes, kings, and intellectual men who changed the course of Church history. Would you be shocked to learn a homeschooled, sheltered girl from a small village in France could revolutionize Christian thinking?

Many Catholics are familiar with Therese, the young girl from France who popularized the "Little Way" of holiness. In the book we are going to read, Father Jacques Philippe unpacks the depth of her wisdom and invites us into the privileged space of growing deeper in love with Jesus through trust.

St. Therese was born into a very devout and protective family. She was tutored at home after being "bullied" out of school. The French church, reeling from years of declining stature in society, struggled to be heard over the din of popular culture. As a reaction, the theology inside the local churches of France became one of moral rigorism emphasizing the importance of the need to comply with rules in order for a person to be considered approved of by God.

When Therese entered the cloistered convent, this point of view was held by many of the sisters. We now understand the power of Scripture and the Eucharist to feed our faith. In Therese's time, frequent reception of communion was discouraged. Many believed perfect contrition was necessary before receiving the Eucharist. Further, she did not have access to an entire bible. Despite the conflict in both popular culture and the church, Therese developed and maintained a fervent love for Jesus and the bible.

Therese's message of the "Little Way" comes disguised in childlike wonder. Some might think of the simplicity of her advice as a platitude. Platitudes are the last thing we want to use. I mean who among us wants to be known

for using moral language to shut down a conversation. Our goal should always be to use language and listening to keep the conversation going. This is complicated.

Therese's words were not intended to end conversations. Instead, she maintained deep, ongoing conversations in her letters and writings.

The revolutionary part of her spiritual mindset is the way *she explained* how *she loved Jesus and how Jesus loved her*. She encouraged everyone to approach God as a loving Father who only wanted the best for His children. She did not use the "Little Way" to curtail conversation. Rather, it was the beginning of many long and beautiful conversations where she revealed her humble and unfailing love for God and other people.

Often we don't know what we think about something until we write or speak our thoughts. Writing your answers and responding to the journal prompts enables you to deepen your understanding of Therese's wisdom. Join me as we discover *The Way of Trust and Love*.

# Chapter 1

## A Completely New Way

Holiness “*does not consist especially in doing extraordinary things, but in allowing God to act. It is the meeting of our weakness with the strength of His grace, it is having faith in His action that allows us to live in charity, to do everything with joy and humility, for the glory of God, and as a service to our neighbor.*” Pope Francis October 2, 2013 homily.

1. God wants to break through our lives in extraordinary ways, yet we are busy trying to make ourselves extra-ordinary. What is Philippe referring to when he uses the term “our littleness” on page 2? What kind of strength can we find in “our littleness”?

2. What is the heart of Christian life mentioned on page 7? Does this sound appealing or frightening to you?

3. What is the “little way” (a.k.a. The “ way of trust and love” or the “way of simple, loving trust”) of St. Thérèse?

4. Why did she *want* to become a saint? What did she see as an impediment to that ambition?

5. We want holiness, but might think we are not called to holiness because of our limitations, state in life, or geography. (“If you only knew what I had to deal with, you would understand why I can’t.) We might also believe we are too weak to follow through on our desire to live in love and to do everything out of joy and humility. (“Certainly God is not calling someone like me to be filled with joy or love that person.”)

On page 14-15, Philippe tells us these two beliefs are wrong.

We cannot become holy on our own. It is God alone who invites us and makes us holy. We need His strength to take even one step on the journey toward holiness, a/k/a a deeper relationship with Him. Yet, the manner in which we gain this strength is counterintuitive. How do we gain this strength?

6. Her vision of how to achieve sainthood involved accepting herself as she was. Philippe points out on page 17 that we wear ourselves out trying to improve other people. What is a good way to conserve this energy?

7. Write down one sentence you underlined between the pages of 1-17.

8. Can we change ourselves on our own? Who changes us?

9. In what three ways was Thérèse's "little way" a new way of looking at the path to holiness?

10. Whenever Therese had a question that upset her, she went to the bible for an answer. What does Philippe suggest for us to do if we want to advance in holiness constructively and positively?

## Scripture

Spend time each day pondering God's Word. If you are short on time, copy one of these passages on a notecard. Schedule two times in the day, pull out the card, and ponder the verse. You may also like using the SOAP method:

**S** - Scribble—Write out the scripture passage.

**O** - Observe - What did you notice, what's new, what stirs your heart?

**A** - Apply - What changes do I need to make in my schedule/mindset?

**P** - Pray— Listen to God. He is whispering to you through Scripture.

**Praise God:** *At that very moment He rejoiced [in] the Holy Spirit and said, "I give you praise, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although You have hidden these things from the wise and the learned You have revealed them to the childlike. Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will."* Luke 10:21

**Trust God in your weakness:** *But He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." I will boast most gladly of my weakness, in order that the power of Christ may dwell with me.* 2 Corinthians 12:9

**The Holy Spirit will help you pray:** *In the same way, the Spirit too comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings. And the One who searches hearts knows what is the intention of the Spirit, because it intercedes for the holy ones according to God's will.* Romans 8:26-27

**Simplify:** *And said, "Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven."* Matthew 18:3

## Journal Prompts

*“Miss no single opportunity of making some small sacrifice, here by a smiling look, there by a kindly word; always doing the smallest right and doing it all for love.”* – Thérèse de Lisieux

**Starting small allows us to focus on building the foundation upon Jesus, my rock.** Writing is a powerful way to make sense of what is happening in my life. It may be the best form of self-kindness available. The act of writing creates new pathways in the brain and improves lives by decreasing stress, improving immune function, and increasing working memory.

The questions this week open with this quote: Holiness *“does not consist especially in doing extraordinary things, but in allowing God to act.”*

**What ordinary actions of every day life am I already doing which draw me closer to God?**

I can channel my energy into changing my schedule rather than trying to change other people. **Name everything I want to change about how I use my time.**

*“Only Scripture has the necessary depth, clarity, and authority to help us find our way.”* (page 22-23) **Read Psalm 96. Ponder the words.**

**Write what comes to mind.**

What little act of courage is God asking of me this week? **Say yes to one small thing God is prompting me to do as a result of my prayer and pondering by putting it on the calendar.**

## **Chapter 2**

### **An Elevator for Small Children**

*“[W]hen we let the feeling of sadness seep into our hearts and minds and extinguish our hope, when we let it convince us to relinquish our evangelizing efforts, then it becomes a danger, a temptation, a threat to the health of our souls—that’s discouragement.”* Fr. John Bartunek

1. What does Philippe say is the main danger in spiritual life? Do you agree or disagree?

2. What was Thérèse’s revolutionary way of looking at herself and God?

3. What is the elevator to holiness?

4. No matter how magnificent our sacrifices, our actions, our holy fame-- these will not save us and allow us to return to God in heaven. How are we saved?

5. What inner attitudes do we need to discover that will make us permeable to God's grace and why? (see page 36-37, 42)

6. When we chase perfection, what do we really want? If we were to become perfect, what/who do we no longer need?

7. Why should we not be discouraged by our faults? Where can we go for consolation when we fail?

8. What is humility?

9. What are the two main signs we are falling into pride?

10. Being humble means consenting to our inner poverty. On page 44, Philippe gives a long list of things we need to consent to in order to remain humble. List 3 areas of your life you would like to accept with childlike trust.

# Scripture

**Rest:** *Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Matthew 11:28*

**Entrance to the Kingdom:** *At that time the disciples approached Jesus and said, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He called a child over, placed it in their midst, and said, "Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 18:1-3*

**Growth:** *He said, "This is how it is with the kingdom of God; it is as if a man were to scatter seed on the land and would sleep and rise night and day and the seed would sprout and grow, he knows not how. Of its own accord the land yields fruit, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. And when the grain is ripe, he wields the sickle at once, for the harvest has come. Mark 4:26-29*

**No Worries:** *Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7*

**The Upside Down Kingdom of God:** *Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:3*

**Take care of your body:** *Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? 1 Corinthians 3:16*

# Journal Prompts

*“A word or a smile is often enough to put fresh life in a despondent soul.”*  
Thérèse de Lisieux

Philippe points out: *“Many of Thérèse’s deepest intuitions are thus based on passages from the Old Testament.”*

In her day, Thérèse did not have access to an entire bible. Her sister, who did not enter the convent and stayed home to take care of her ailing father, sent her passages in her letters. Her sister’s sacrifices and words of encouragement allowed Thérèse to grow deeper in her faith. **What does it mean to sacrifice and offer words of encouragement to help someone else grow closer to Christ in ways I may never recognize?**

*“I don’t aim at any extraordinary feats or grandiose deeds that everyone would admire. In the banality of my daily life, I seek to please God in little things, alert for every opportunity of showing simple signs of love, offering myself, etc.--not to accumulate merits or rise above other people, but for love, to please God as a child seeks to please her father.”*

**Create a list of simple acts of love I can offer to the people around me.** With each item, name why this simple act of love is important and should be done. (Remember to be as specific as possible.)

**Name the things that prevent me from sharing a smile, an encouraging word, or a small act of kindness?**

## Chapter 3

# Being Reconciled to Our Weaknesses

*The smallest movement of pure love is more useful to the Church than all other works put together.* St. John of the Cross

1. If we accept ourselves as we are, we also accept what? If we reject ourselves as we are, we are cut off from what? Is this a new idea?

2. *“We make others pay for our difficulty accepting our own inner poverty.”* (Ouch!) Philippe says most of our conflicts with others are nothing more than a projection of the conflicts we are having with ourselves. Can you give an example of a time you recognized this happening in your own life or the life of someone you know?

3. There is a line we need to walk between falling into sin out of complacency and being so hard on ourselves as to reject God's love. Why is it important to practice **gentleness** with ourselves? (pg. 52)

4. Life is busy and we can often feel like we are being pulled in many different directions. When this happens, it is easy to become confused about what is essential in our lives and what is an accessory. God wants to eliminate our internal division by unifying our desires. What is the **one desire** God wants you to recognize as the deepest and most essential? (If you need help, Philippe lists several on page 53.)

5. Will living out this one desire look the same for each one of us? Why or why not?

6. What is the only thing that can make us absolutely happy? (pg. 54)

7. Why should we **avoid** ridding ourselves of *absolutely all* imperfections or healing every wound we suffer? When we **strive to become perfect**, who are we paying more attention to, God or ourselves?

8. What feature most characterizes spiritual childhood?

9. What lies at the heart of the path to holiness?

10. When we are faced with discouragement and tempted to hide in our shell or run away from our internal suffering, we need to remember **two** things the Holy Spirit longs to do for us. What are those two things? (page 65)

## Scripture

**Rely upon your Father:** *Jesus, however, called the children to Himself and said, “Let the children come to me and do not prevent them; for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Amen, I say to you, whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it.”* Luke 18:16-17

**We can grow in our suffering:** *Endure your trials as “discipline”; God treats you as sons. For what “son” is there whom his father does not discipline?* Hebrews 12:7

**Love first:** *If I speak in human and angelic tongues, but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal.* 1 Corinthians 13:1

**Love God and your neighbor:** *“Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” He said to him, “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.”* Matthew 22:36-39

**God pays attention to the smallest details:** *We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to His purpose.* Romans 8:28

## Journal Prompts

*Holiness is a real desire to rely upon God's grace in order to love Him and our neighbor.* **Name the words that stand out in this quote. What do these words stir in me?**

*Knowing and accepting the truth about ourselves liberates us from discouragement.* **What is my natural response to discouragement?**

*"God isn't shocked by our weaknesses."* **What are some ways I can practice gentleness with myself?**

*The smallest movement of pure love is more useful to the Church than all other works put together.* (St. John of the Cross) It is easy to become discouraged thinking we are not accomplishing great things in our lives. **What would be different about my life if I took these words from St. John of the Cross to heart?**

*My whole strength lies in prayer and sacrifice, these are my invincible arms; they can move hearts far better than words, I know it by experience.* Thérèse de Lisieux

**Write about a time in the past when prayer and/or sacrifice made a bigger impact than words or hard work.**

## Chapter 4

# Trusting More and More

*“The deepest knowledge of God available to us in this life passes through the experience of divine mercy, God’s forgiveness.”* Philippe (74)

1. Therese rests her spiritual mindset firmly at the intersection of God’s mercy and justice by reimagining God’s justice. She shows us how to pivot away from seeing God as a harsh taskmaster who judges us based upon how well we perform while measuring our output. She points us in a different direction altogether.

How easily we become discouraged when we recognize our own weaknesses and shortcomings and believe we are disappointing God by being who we are. Philippe reminds us, *“God is not scandalized by our weaknesses.”* (p. 68) Put the quote from St. Therese at the top of page 68 into your own words.

2. How do you and God work together to heal your heart from your fears and doubts? What is the primary resource to nurture your trust in God?

3. An Act of Faith is compared to a mustard seed which, when sown, eventually bears fruit in our lives. Although this sounds like an antiquated or even super-pious thing to do, it's something that is transformational. The beautiful part, this action is hidden from the world and remains a secret between you and God. Name the steps for making an Act of Faith. (p. 71)

4. Discovering the true face of God nourishes our trust. How can we discover the true face of God? Where do we find this? (p. 74)

5. How can Mary help us on our path to know God? (pp. 76-77)

6. If we were each to become a “*burning bush of the Most High*” (p. 78) the world around us would slowly change. How would our individual family, church, neighborhood, office, etc. improve?

7. It is so easy to become distracted by the bad news we see and hear. We cannot deny or ignore the tremendous problems all around. At the same time, we cannot let these problems overwhelm us. Father Philippe suggests that the more crisis-stricken the world is the more we must have what kind of disposition? Why? (p. 80)

8. What are the four things that will fill us with trust and peace? (p. 80)

9. What *must* be the result of prayer and contemplation?

10. Why do we need to persevere when prayer becomes difficult, boring, or emotionally painful?

11. Therese gives us hope that Jesus remains with us even if we do not have fantastic moments in prayer or visions. She is quoted on pages 86-87, when does she receive her inspiration?

## **Scripture**

**Antidote to fear:** *The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom should I fear? The Lord is my life's refuge; of whom should I be afraid? Psalm 27:1*

**Go to your Father with your requests:** *Do not be afraid any longer, little flock, for your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom. Luke 12:32*

**Patience:** *Even if my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will take me in. I believe I shall see the Lord's goodness in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord, take courage; be stouthearted, wait for the Lord! Psalm 27:10, 13-14*

**Hope in Him always:** *Though the mountains fall away and the hills be shaken, My love shall never fall away from you nor my covenant of peace be shaken, says the Lord, who has mercy on you. Isaiah 54:10*

**No fear:** *What then shall we say to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? Romans 8:31*

## Journal Prompts

*“Fear is one of our worst enemies.”* (p 80) Knowing what I fear is the first step in addressing and abandoning fear in favor of trusting God. **Make a list of everything I am afraid of changing.** If I need help getting started, I can create categories for the areas of my life: body, soul, mind, and heart.

*“But the only things that give us access to the depths of our hearts, to our deepest identity, to the child of God that each of us is, are faith and prayer.”* **It’s time to take my prayer temperature. If it’s cold, have I been drifting away from my regular prayer rhythm? If it is hot, how am I protecting my rhythm of prayer?**

*“We don’t need great lights in prayer, we need them in making decisions and acting.”* It is easy to become discouraged when prayer feels as though it is taking me nowhere fast. But, this quote from Philippe reminds me I can’t use great lights if I were to receive them in prayer. **Write about a time when I was able to make a decision, share wisdom, or take action and I recognized my confidence coming from God and not myself.**

## Chapter 5

# God's Infinite Mercy

*I want to love you like a little child, I want to battle like a warrior bold.*  
St. Therese of Lisieux

1. Some people recommend retreating from the world, doing everything you can to protect yourself from being exposed to the evils of society or culture. Philippe recommends navigating life based on Scripture. What 2 attitudes does he recommend we adopt?

2. On page 91, Philippe lists some common reactions to negative circumstances and their antidotes. What are they?

**Negative Reaction**

**Antidote**

3. What is a clear sign we have placed our trust in ourselves?

4. What is the danger in examining our conscience without placing our hope and trust in God first? (p 94)

5. In the section on confession (p 96-100), what part stands out to you? Does this section change the way you think about examining your conscience and confessing sins?

6. Why is it important to accept forgiveness?

7. What is abandonment? When do we need it and why?

8. Philippe reminds us that we exhaust ourselves going over past events with worry and looking into the future with worry. What does living in the present moment mean? What is one practice you could incorporate into your day to help you live in the present moment?

9. What does Philippe say about the difficulty we have in loving our neighbor as ourselves? What is the spiritual banquet she sought to give the other sisters? (p 107-109)

10. When we feel as though God is far away, how can we recover our strength?

11. What does gratitude prevent?

12. Why does Fr. Phillippe suggest we should live in an atmosphere of gratitude to God?

## Scripture

**Never alone:** *But I am not alone, because the Father is with me. I have told you this so that you might have peace in me. In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world.* John 16:32b-33

**Rejoice in His power:** *Behold, I have given you the power to ‘tread upon serpents’ and scorpions and upon the full force of the enemy and nothing will harm you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice because the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice because your names are written in heaven.* Luke 10:19-20

**Action needed:** *For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his own face in a mirror. He sees himself, then goes off and promptly forgets what he looked like. But the one who peers into the perfect law of freedom and perseveres, and is not a hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, such a one shall be blessed in what he does.* James 1:23-25

**Be Present Today:** *Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself. Sufficient for a day is its own evil.* Matthew 6:34

**Gratitude:** *In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.* 1 Thessalonians 5:18

## Journal Prompts

*“Discouragement is a clear sign that we’ve put our trust in ourselves and not in God at all.”* (93) Discouragement is one feeling that will surely drive me away from God. **When have I felt discouraged recently? Where did the discouragement come from? Be as specific as possible to uncover the triggers and name the sources of discouragement.**

*“God’s love is not subject to eclipses.”* (Philippe) God’s love is **always** available. I might think my emotions determine God’s presence. If I am happy, it is easy to pray. Anger, frustration, disappointment, and discouragement make it harder to reach out and trust God. The only time God’s love is blocked is if I am turning my back on Him. **Read the quote again and write what comes to mind.**

**Reflect on these quotes, write a response to the quote:**

*“[Repentance] isn’t measured so much by our feelings as by our desire to be converted and begin over again.”* (p 97)

*“God does not dole out grace by a sort of profit-and-loss accounting of my past based on my good and bad actions.”* (p 105)

*“In a grateful heart there is no longer any room for rancor, blame, unpleasantness, jealousy, and all the rest. Our hearts, remaining pure, are able to perceive God’s action.”* (p 116)

## Chapter 6

### Enduring Trials

*“If I did not simply live from one moment to another, it would be impossible for me to be patient, but I only look at the present, I forget the past, and I take good care not to forestall the future.”*

– Thérèse de Lisieux

1. *“Everything is grace”* is one of St. Therese’s famous quotes. What does this statement mean to you in light of all of the suffering you have witnessed and experienced?

2. Should we treat all types of suffering the same way? Why or why not?

3. What 3 things are common to all trials?

4. When we are faced with suffering we ask questions of faith. What are some statements we can make to reinforce our faith so that we do not remain stuck in the question loop? (p 120)

5. Where can we turn when we realize that people or things we relied upon are not what they seem? What is our only real security?

6. Suffering is never pleasant. God accompanies us in our suffering and shines light on His goodness as we slowly recognize our own frailty. What scripture verse on page 123 can we memorize to reinforce this concept?

7. What can happen if we continue to pray even when we do not enjoy it? (p 124)

8. Each crisis is an opportunity to grow. We can embrace or reject this growth. In order to embrace growth, a certain level of personal reflection must take place. We can begin the reflection by asking ourselves questions. When you are in a crisis or suffering through a trial, what essential questions does Philippe suggest you should ask?

9. It is tempting to blame our problems on other people and find a scapegoat to blame as the source of our suffering. This psychological trick allows us to escape responsibility for growing and moving forward. This is natural but dangerous. What is the best question to ask ourselves when we find bitterness and blame have entered into our conversations? (p 129)

10. Knowledge and a deeper understanding of any situation will not save us in the end. What are the two things that will save us? (p 130)

11. When we are worried or preoccupied by life, we need a mindset shift to help us move toward trust and love. Philippe offers some questions we can ask ourselves that helps us move forward. Write out the list of questions Philippe includes on page 131.

12. What happens when we drop the victim attitude and assume an attitude of responsibility?

## Scripture

**Our mission:** *“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”* Matthew 28:20

**Instructions for the mission:** *Behold, I am sending you like sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and simple as doves.*  
Matthew 10:16

**Soft-hearted posture:** *I will sprinkle clean water over you to make you clean; from all your impurities and from all your idols I will cleanse you. I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.*  
Ezekiel 36:25-26

**Hope for the mission:** Read/Pray Psalm 21

**Peaceful and grateful in the mission:** *And let the peace of Christ control your hearts, the peace into which you were also called in one body. And be thankful.* Colossians 3:15

## **Journal Prompts**

Read the Beatitudes found in Matthew 5:3-12.

**What questions does this passage raise?**

**Which of the Beatitudes console me today?**

**Which Beatitude challenges me the most? Why?**

Life was not easy for St. Therese. She had grand desires which she was not able to successfully achieve in her everyday life. She was sensitive, often sick, and a little bit of a prima donna. Her internal drama did not separate her from the love of God. **What are three things I have learned from St. Therese and Jacques Philippe?**