

December 2023

## Review of Introduction to Spirituality: Cultivating a Lifestyle of Faithfulness

Justin R. Bamba

*Liberty University*, [jrbamba@liberty.edu](mailto:jrbamba@liberty.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/elevol7iss213>



Part of the [Christianity Commons](#), and the [Practical Theology Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Bamba, Justin R.. 2023. "Review of Introduction to Spirituality: Cultivating a Lifestyle of Faithfulness." *Eleutheria: John W. Rawlings School of Divinity Academic Journal* 7, (2). <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/elevol7iss213>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Rawlings School of Divinity at Scholars Crossing. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Eleutheria: John W. Rawlings School of Divinity Academic Journal* by an authorized editor of Scholars Crossing. For more information, please contact [scholarlycommunications@liberty.edu](mailto:scholarlycommunications@liberty.edu).

---

## Review of Introduction to Spirituality: Cultivating a Lifestyle of Faithfulness

### Abstract

Tyra, Gary. Introduction to Spirituality: Cultivating a Lifestyle of Faithfulness. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2023. 189 pages. \$24.99

### Keywords

Christian, Spirituality, Spiritual Disciplines, Trinity

### Cover Page Footnote

Justin R. Bamba, MA in Biblical Studies, Liberty University (in progress; expected 2024).

**Tyra, Gary. *Introduction to Spirituality: Cultivating a Lifestyle of Faithfulness*.** Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2023. 189 pages. \$24.99.

Contrary to past predictions of the grand secularization of the United States, it has become increasingly apparent that there is a growing interest in spiritualities of every variety. In his book *Introduction to Spirituality: Cultivating a Lifestyle of Faithfulness*, Gary Tyra draws on his pastoral and academic experience to answer this growing fascination with an exploration of a Christian lifestyle spirituality. Tyra received his D.Min. from Fuller Theological Seminary and currently teaches theology at Vanguard University of Southern California. Previously, he served as the senior pastor for three churches over a 27-year period. He is the author of eight other books, most of which are concerned with discipleship and spirituality.

Those searching for a handbook on practical spiritual exercises will have to look elsewhere; however, Tyra rightly recognizes that such disciplines as fasting, meditation, solitude, etc. are ineffective, even harmful, without a proper orientation towards the triune God of Christianity. In this book, Tyra seeks to encourage his readers towards a lifestyle of spirituality that is uniquely grounded in a trinitarian theology. He appropriately divides his book into three sections, exploring the *convictions* (root), the *commitments* (shoot), and the *customs* necessary to develop a flourishing Christian lifestyle spirituality.

Section 1 is concerned with foundational convictions, the *root*, without which a spirituality will either wither and die or devolve into a thinly disguised obsession with the self (15-50). Here Tyra lays the primary foundation for his book, that a Christian spirituality will thrive insofar as it recognizes the vital role of *each* member of the Trinity and is grounded in a “trinitarian realism” (22-26). Under this trinitarian model, Tyra argues that a Christian spirituality involves a “threefold faithfulness...a spiritual, moral, and missional faithfulness” (49). He then takes the rest of his book to examine the mindsets and practices that contribute to this threefold faithfulness and explore how each member of the trinity is involved. Tyra concludes part 1 with an important reminder, reiterating the need to cultivate a theocentric, not a “me-centric,” relationship with the triune God. Any spirituality that fails to do so will ultimately “become *narcissistic* and *utilitarian* in essence...with a *consumeristic* mentality in place” (35).

In section 2, Tyra devotes a chapter to each of the three *commitments* that are necessary to cultivate “a Christ-emulating, Spirit-empowered, God-the-Father-pleasing lifestyle spirituality” (49). In chapter 3, Tyra seeks to address the “pneumatological deficit” (55) he sees plaguing churches today; he exhorts his readers to “keep in step with the Spirit” (Gal. 5:25) by cultivating a lifestyle of active surrender and cooperation with the Holy Spirit. In chapter 4, he similarly argues that a faithful spiritual lifestyle requires the believer to seek the

empowering presence of Christ, a “moment-by-moment mentoring relationship” with Him (86). In chapter 5, Tyra adds a dimension that broadens this Christian spirituality so that it encompasses more than mere personal growth. He argues that such lifestyle spirituality must involve missional faithfulness, i.e., it must be concerned with the Father’s mission to preach and spread the gospel (85-91). The relational intimacy one experiences with the triune God is directly proportional to the degree one is concerned with the desires and pleasures of God.

In his final section, Tyra examines the *customs*, or the spiritual disciplines that—when properly grounded in the right convictions (part 1) and the right commitments (part 2)—can lead to a flourishing lifestyle spirituality. In chapter 6, he examines the concept of prayer and explores Paul’s idea of “praying without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17) as a “mood” or a “state of being that is virtually ongoing—a lingering season of hopeful waiting on God” (112-113). In keeping with this idea of an ongoing communing with the Spirit, in the next chapter Tyra encourages his readers to abide in Christ by engaging in morning devotions, Scripture memorization, and spiritual reading: namely, non-Scripture books that encourage spiritual formation (128-131). Most importantly, he encourages his readers to pursue Christ’s presence even while engaged in day-to-day mundane or “secular” activities (135-139). In chapter 8, Tyra explores the attitudes and habits that contribute to a missional spirituality where one can draw others to come taste and see the grace of God (145-157).

At this point, Tyra’s sketch of a “lifestyle of faithfulness” is complete, and he has fully explored the spiritual, moral, and missional faithfulness that leads to a flourishing relationship with each respective member of the Holy Trinity. But in his final chapter, Tyra turns to the spiritual exercises (fasting, meditation, service, etc.) that many readers may have expected to see sooner. However, he reiterates his concern to provide the theological and spiritual grounding that allows such exercises to serve their purpose: to reorient the believer towards total dependence on God and not simply become ends in themselves.<sup>1</sup>

In an age where self-help books and “how-to” manuals on spirituality (even Christian spirituality) continue to proliferate and focus on spiritual exercises alone, Tyra’s concern to lay the theological and spiritual groundwork for future discussions of such practical disciplines is both admirable and timely. And while not all readers will agree with Tyra’s theological beliefs, such as those concerning Christian apostasy (41-42, 64), *glossalia* (117-125), and the sacraments (156), his emphasis on a “perpetual” lifestyle spirituality, rather than a checklist of spiritual exercises, should encourage believers of all backgrounds to thoughtfully reflect on their current relationship with the Lord. And though it remains remarkably concise, the book introduces a wide range of issues, from philosophical realism to

---

<sup>1</sup> Note that although Tyra spends little time discussing practical spiritual exercises, he still recognizes their value and refers his readers to other resources for further study (159-171).

incarnational ministry, from relational apologetics to the practice of speaking in tongues. Yet throughout his book, Tyra remains committed to grounding his discussion in the Word of God, not least evidenced by the preponderance of Scripture references in his footnotes.

Make no mistake, Tyra's emphasis on spiritual and *missional* faithfulness should elicit a hearty "Amen!" from any believer seriously seeking to practice the presence of God. Scripture is painfully clear that God desires the gospel spread and all saved (cf. Matt. 28:16-20, 1 Tim. 2:3-4). Yet it is curious that Tyra's book includes little discussion of the discipleship of born-again believers.<sup>2</sup> Such mentorships are surely an integral part of Christian spirituality, edifying both the mentor and the mentee. As Tyra repeatedly emphasizes, there is probably no Christian figure more concerned with missions and evangelism than the Apostle Paul. However, Paul was equally concerned with the welfare and discipleship of the Christians and churches he had *already* established as well (cf. Eph. 4:11-16; Heb. 5:12; 2 Tim. 2:2, 3:16-17), as were the other apostles (cf. 1 Pet. 2:1-3; 2 Pet. 3:18; Jude 3; 1 Jn. 2:1, 5:13). An evangelistic, missional mindset is certainly essential to a faithful spirituality and is frankly lacking among many contented evangelicals today. Nonetheless, one does not want to sacrifice the discipleship and spiritual formation of those already within the church in an effort to bring more people inside.

Overall, Tyra's book *Introduction to Spirituality* proves to be a valuable resource for providing the biblical and theological foundations necessary for spiritual exercises. Tyra's concise yet thorough treatment of a lifestyle spirituality is readily accessible to any student or churchgoer interested in deepening their relationship with the triune God. The review questions provided at the end of each chapter will easily encourage small group discussions and personal reflection. Some of Tyra's suggestions are not revolutionary (e.g., starting the day with prayer, morning devotions, Scripture memorization, etc.), but he has grounded such practical exercises in a robust, uniquely trinitarian dimension that should, at the least, cause believers to reconsider and appreciate the fullness of the triunity of God.

---

<sup>2</sup> He does discuss discipleship in terms of being disciplined by the Holy Spirit or mentored by Christ (57-58, 81). But this is hardly the same as the discipleship *of* believers *by* other believers within the larger context of the church.