



THE **Wine** *and*
WORD

SAVOR & SERVE

By

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CHAPTER FIVE

Integration as a Strategy for Living

There is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live; also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil—this is God’s gift to man.

Ecclesiastes 3:12-13

The second quality to consider when determining the greatness of a wine is integration. This is the result when a wine’s various components—its acidity, tannin structure, alcohol content, fruitiness,



sweetness and/or dryness—are so impeccably interwoven so that no one characteristic or component stands out. Integration denotes more than just balance; it also implies a healthy tension of opposites that “come together in harmonious fusion.”¹⁴

Internationally known wine expert Hugh Johnson describes how wine needs to have balance, harmony and energy, “as though the wine were a living organism interacting with my tongue and palate.”¹⁵ Johnson draws a comparison to the world of music—how the various notes relate to each other to produce harmony or discord. What type of “volume” does the wine project, and what are the internal balances between volumes? He notes, “A

brass chord may fill your ears, but a new phrase from the violin or a whisper from the woodwind will still catch your attention.”¹⁶ A Meursault white Burgundy comes to mind as a perfect example of such harmony.

To celebrate a Hong Kong publisher acquiring the rights to my most recent book, my wife and I shared a bottle of a 2008 Opus One that captured our imagination in this symphonic manner. A Robert Mondavi/Baron Philippe de Rothschild joint venture, this admittedly overpriced masterpiece uses a combination of Napa Valley Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Petit Verdot and Malbec grapes to produce a Bordeaux-Pauillac blend that lingered in our hearts, senses and imagination long after the bottle was emptied. The soothing combination was truly a gift for which we took time to pause, reflect and give thanks.

When drinking a fine wine, it is recommended that the glass be filled only halfway, leaving room to swirl the liquid and allow the oxygen thereby introduced to enhance the aroma and flavor, adding to the integration. There are times our lives, like an improperly poured glass of wine, lack integration and balance. The cumulative layering of managing deadlines and pressures at work, taxiing our children to after-school activities, answering

one more email or caring for an elderly parent fills up our time, leaving no room for that which would enhance our lives. Like modern-day Marthas, we scurry from task to task, missing the “one good part” that brings harmony to our days.

In our striving to lead integrated lives we often need reminding that perfection will never exist this side of heaven. We lead both/and lives—broken and forgiven, selfish and generous, arrogant and humble. Having written a couple of books on this inherent tension in my Christian walk, and having been informed by family members and colleagues that I am a work in progress, I will refrain from giving a lecture. Suffice it to say, in my experience an integrated life is more a blend than a balance. Blending occurs when we intuitively understand that all aspects of what I refer to as our vocation—family, professional, community and church spheres—are equally important. In our baptism we are recreated; that which had been out of balance is restored so that the spheres of our vocation interact and are mutually supportive, rather than being used to compete and be in conflict. Integration also requires that we pay equal attention to both the doing and being aspect of our lives. It is as important to take time for spiritual renewal and personal revitalization as it is to

reach out and serve others.

A life well lived is measured not by how much we do but by how well we do it. At every turn in our path are people to whom we can offer care in the name of Jesus. Integrated living is the natural by-product when we comprehend that we have been created to worship God and be of service to others. Only then will we experience—even in the midst of our hectic, stress-filled days—the peace that passes all understanding.

The Book of Proverbs tells of a woman who successfully integrated the various aspects of her life. Thomas Addington and Thomas Graves describe her as follows:

This woman got high marks from the customers in all the key sectors of her life. In the family area . . . her husband had full confidence in her (v. 11) and her children called her blessed (v. 28). Her business associates recognized that she was a wise investor (vv. 16, 18), a conscientious employer (v.15) and a hard worker (v. 17). In her community, she was known for caring for the poor (v. 20), and she was praised at the city gate for her “works” (v.31).¹⁷

Note especially verse 16: “She considers a field and buys it: