

Steps on the Mystical Path

It is not possible to decide to have a mystical experience in the same way that we can of our own volition sit down to pray or meditate. The overwhelming experience of the mystic is given at unexpected times.

There are approaches, like meditation, which may make it somewhat more likely that mystical experiences will occur. We prepare the way by cultivating other forms of the devotional life. All that has previously been said about more complete openness, and about prayer, devotional experiencing, meditation, and contemplation applies here.

Purgation is a stage which precedes both illumination and union with God. Purgation involves a stripping away of anything that would hinder our relationship to God.

“The dark night of the soul” can be interpreted as a dry period which comes to even the most advanced climbers toward devotional peaks. Sainly persons encourage us to keep on with our devotional practices, even when we feel no returns for a time. The concept of “the dark night of the soul” also carries a second meaning. It has been used to refer to the painful struggle which accompanies the final surrender of the egocentric self. This surrender is necessary before the final assault on the mystical peaks.

Exploratory Exercises

The mystical experience is unpredictably given. We can only prepare for its possible occurrence by greater openness and increased attention to God, and by deepening and expanding forms of devotional growth. Therefore, many exercises previously suggested might also be listed here. Continue those practices which have been most meaningful to you, letting yourself be even more open to God and more completely immersed in your selected forms of devotion. As somewhat different versions of previous practices, you might use the following.

Imagine that you are outside during a clear night looking at brilliant stars overhead – or that you are in a mountain valley with green trees and a murmuring stream – or that you are sitting alone in a beautiful church with lighted candles and a simple cross on the stand. Enhance whichever setting you select by visualizing other details. Concentrate upon a sense of God in that situation.

Sit relaxed with eyes closed. Imagine yourself bathed in brilliant light, permeating your entire body, mind, and being. Feel all shadows, tensions, and impurities dropping away, to be replaced by peace, joy and abundant energy.

Or, instead of light, you might center on beauty, power, love, or God. Remember that this is more than fantasy. Spiritually we are surrounded by light, beauty, power, love, and God. In reality our present vitalities are a part of the central energy flow permeating the entire universe.

To examine your own lesser claims in loyalty to God, do depth Bible meditation on Exodus 20:1-3, Matthew 10:37 and 16:24-26, and Acts 5:27-29.

Recall the most mystical moments you have had, and their accompanying circumstances. *What can you learn from these about preparing for deeper mystical experiences in the future?*