



MYSTICAL FOUNDATIONS

Disciplines & Dispositions

- ✿ The mystical life is one of engaging in **spiritual disciplines** that nurture **spiritual dispositions**.
- ✿ **Disciplines** are **practices** that ground our lives and teach us how to form a deeper relationship with the Trinity.
- ✿ **Dispositions** are **personal qualities** that enhance our lives and “dispose” us to a greater awareness and deeper connection with God, others, and even ourselves.

MYSTICAL DISCIPLINES

acts that teach and train us to grow spiritually

- ✿ **Worship**
- ✿ **Scripture Reading**
- ✿ **Confession**
- ✿ **Meditation**
- ✿ **Journaling and reflection**
- ✿ **Intercessory Prayer**
- ✿ **Contemplative Prayer**
- ✿ **Prayer walking**
- ✿ **Labyrinth walking**
- ✿ **Spiritual Direction**
- ✿ **Giving**
- ✿ **Other disciplines?**



Mystical Dispositions

Mystical Dispositions

- ✿ *Dispositions* are our **natural inclinations** that shape our character, and grow through our **receptivity**, and **responsiveness** to God.
- ✿ As we nurture them, they transform us by **allowing God's presence and grace to flow more consonantly through our lives**.
- ✿ They are natural in that they lie at our core, but **they need to be exercised through our intentional choices and practices**—they are like raw, spiritual materials.

Mystical Dispositions

- ✿ **Deepening our dispositions** is a significant aim of spiritual practices, which strengthen these dispositions.
- ✿ **Dispositional formation and transformation** should be our focus when it comes to the spiritual life,... the practices are secondary
- ✿ There are also more **dissonant dispositions** that can interfere with with the formation of spiritual dispositions:
 - ✿ *Fearfulness, anger, jealousy, distrust, narcissism, and others that deform life.*

Mystical Dispositions

The following is a list of *some* dispositions, but not all:

- ✿ Faith
- ✿ Humility
- ✿ Gratitude
- ✿ Abandonment
- ✿ Living in the Present Moment
- ✿ Acceptance
- ✿ Prayerfulness
- ✿ Wisdom
- ✿ Awareness of the Divine

Faith

David Steindl-Rast, *Gratefulness, the Heart of Prayer*

To have faith does not primarily mean believing something, but rather believing in someone. Faith is trust. It takes courage to trust. The opposite of faith is not disbelief, but distrust, fear. Fear makes us cling to anything within reach. Fear clings even to beliefs. Thus, beliefs can even get in the way of faith. In genuine faith we hold our beliefs firmly, but lightly. We trust in God, not in our particular understanding of God. That is why people of deep faith are one at heart, even though their beliefs may differ widely. When beliefs become more important than faith, even small differences create insurmountable barriers.

Faith

Hannah Whitall Smith, *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*

Remember always that there are two things which are more utterly incompatible even than oil and water, and these two are trust and worry. Would you call it trust if you should give something into the hands of a friend to attend for you, and then should spend your nights and days in anxious thought and worry as to whether it would be rightly and successfully done? And can you call it trust, when you have given the saving and keeping of your soul into the hands of the Lord, if day after day, and night after night, you are spending hours of anxious thought and questioning about the matter?...

You have trusted God in a few things, and God has not failed you. Trust God now for everything, and see if God does not do for you exceedingly abundantly, above all that you could ever have asked or even thought, not according to your power or capacity, but according to God's own mighty power, working in you all the good pleasure of God's most blessed will.

Humility

Thomas á Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*

Everyone naturally wishes to have knowledge, but what good is great learning unless it is accompanied by a feeling of deep awe and profound reverence toward God? Indeed, a humble farmer who serves God is better than a proud philosopher, who neglecting himself, contemplates the course of the heavens. The person who truly knows himself seems common in his own eyes...

If you want to learn something that will really help you, learn to see yourself as God sees you and not as you see yourself in the distorted mirror of your own self-importance. This is the greatest and most useful lesson we can learn: to know ourselves for what we truly are, to admit freely our weaknesses and failings, and to hold a humble opinion of ourselves because of them. Not to dwell on ourselves and always to think well and highly of others is great wisdom and perfection.

Humility

Thomas Merton, *The Wisdom of the Desert*

A brother in Scete happened to commit a fault, and the elders assembled and sent for Abbot Moses to join them. He, however, did not want to come. The priests sent him a message, saying: Come, the community of the brethren is waiting for you. So he arose and started off. And taking with him a very old basket full of holes, he filled it with sand, and carried it behind him. The elders came out to meet him, and said: What is this, Father? The elder replied: My sins are running out behind me, and I do not see them, and today I come to judge the sins of another! They, hearing this, said nothing to the brother but pardoned him.

Abandonment

Thomas Merton, *Thoughts in Solitude*

My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

Gratitude

David Steindl-Rast, *Gratefulness, the Heart of Prayer*

What counts on your path to fulfillment is that we remember the great truth that moments of surprise want to teach us: everything is gratuitous, everything is gift. The degree to which we are awake to this truth is the measure of our gratefulness. And gratefulness is the measure of our aliveness....

In moments when we are truly alive, we experience life as a gift. We also experience life as surprise.

Living in the Present Moment

C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*

The humans live in time, but our Enemy [God] destines them to eternity. He therefore, I believe, wants them to attend chiefly to two things, to eternity itself and to that point of time which they call the Present. For the Present is the point at which time touches eternity. Of the present moment, and of it only, humans have an experience analogous to the experience which our Enemy has of reality as a whole; in it alone freedom and actuality are offered them. He would therefore have them continually concerned either with eternity (which means being concerned with Him) or with the Present...

Living in the Present Moment

Frank Laubach, *Letters by a Modern Mystic*

I feel simply carried along each hour, doing my part in a plan which is far beyond myself. This sense of cooperation with God in little things is what so astonishes me, for I never have felt it this way before. I need something, and turn round to find it waiting for me. I must work, to be sure, but there is God working along with me. To know this gives a sense of security and assurance for the future which is also new to my life. I seem to have to make sure of only one thing now, and every other thing "takes care of itself," or I prefer to say what is more true, God takes care of all the rest. My part is to live this hour in continuous inner conversation with God and in perfect responsiveness to His will, to make this hour gloriously rich. This seems to be all I need think about.

Acceptance

Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*

There is no one in the world without some trouble or uncertainty, be he a king or a pope. Who is it who has the better part? Certainly, the person who can endure anything for God....

Truly, life can be a great trial! The more one wishes to be spiritual, the more difficult the present life can seem, for as one progresses in the spiritual life, his flawed nature becomes more and more apparent... Indeed, a person who quietly lives his life in his own heart is greatly weighed down by what the world requires of him; whence, the prophet devoutly prays that he may be freed as far as possible, saying: "Deliver me from my necessities, Lord."

Prayerfulness

Evelyn Underhill, *Life as Prayer*

A real man or woman of prayer, then, should be a live wire, a link between God's grace and the world that needs it. In so far as you have given your lives to God, you have offered yourselves, without conditions, as transmitters of His saving and enabling love: and the will and love, the emotional drive, which you thus consecrate to God's purposes, can do actual work on supernatural levels for those for whom you are called upon to pray. One human spirit can, by its prayer and love, touch and change another human spirit; it can take a soul and lift it to the atmosphere of God.

Prayerfulness

François Fénelon, *Talking with God*

True prayer is simply another name for the love of God. Its excellence does not consist in the multitude of our words, for our Father knows what we need before we ask him. True prayer is that of the heart, and the heart prays only for what it desires. To pray, then, is to desire or long for, but to desire what God would have us desire. He who asks, but not from the bottom of the heart, is mistaken in thinking that he prays. Even though he spends days in reciting prayers in meditation, or in forcing himself in religious exercises, he does not once truly pray if he really does not desire and yearn for the things he pretends to ask.

Awareness of Divine Presence

Jean-Pierre de Caussade, *The Sacrament of the Present Moment*

You are seeking God, dear sister, and he is everywhere. Everything proclaims him to you, everything reveals him to you, everything brings him to you. He is by your side, over you, around and in you. Here he is dwelling and yet you still seek him. Ah! You are searching for God, the idea of God in his essential being. You seek perfection and it lies in everything that happens to you – your suffering, your actions, your impulses are the mysteries under which God reveals himself to you. But he will never disclose himself in the shape of that exalted image to which you so vainly cling.

Awareness of Divine Presence

Agnes Sanford, *The Healing Light*

God is both within and without us. He is the source of all life; the creator of universe behind universe; and of unimaginable depths of inter-stellar space and of light-years without end. But He is also the indwelling life of our own little selves. And just as a whole world full of electricity will not light a house unless the house itself is prepared to receive that electricity, so the infinite and eternal life of god cannot help us unless we are prepared to receive that light within ourselves. *Only the amount of God that we can get in us will work for us.*

Wisdom

Paul Tillich, *The Eternal Now*

[T]here cannot be wisdom without an encounter with the holy, with that which creates awe, and shakes the ordinary way of life and thought. Without the experience of awe in the face of the mystery of life, there is no wisdom. Most removed from wisdom are not those who are driven for desire or power, but those brilliant minds who have never encountered the holy, who are without awe and know nothing sacred, but who are able to conceal their ultimate emptiness by the brilliant performances of their intellect...

He who has encountered the mystery of life has reached the source of wisdom... He experiences the limits of his being, his finitude in the face of the infinite. He learns that acceptance of limits is the decisive step towards wisdom. The fool rebels against the limits set by his finitude. He wants to be unlimited in power and knowledge. He who is wise accepts his finitude. He knows that he is not God.

Wisdom

J. Heinrich Arnold, *Discipleship*

Let us watch that we never ever become obsessed by a principle, however right and true. By itself, the "right" principle is deadly. It kills the soul. "Right" principles resulted in Gethsemane. They too easily take the place that belongs only to God, his goodness, and his grace. Our principles must be overshadowed by our love to one another and by the compassion and grace of God.