



## MYSTICAL PRACTICES



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## MYSTICAL DISCIPLINES

acts that teach and train us to grow spiritually

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

All who seek God have a perennial tendency to idolize the means through which he is made known to us. Perhaps it was by means of an altar call that God wonderfully broke into our lives. Perhaps it was in the reciting of a particular liturgy, or the singing of a special hymn, or the reading of a specific book, or in the immediate quiet of our home, or while we were in a particular posture. We then take that living experience and calcify it and idolize it as the way to meet God. Without realizing it, we soon turn a vibrant, life-giving reality into a new legalism, which breathes death.

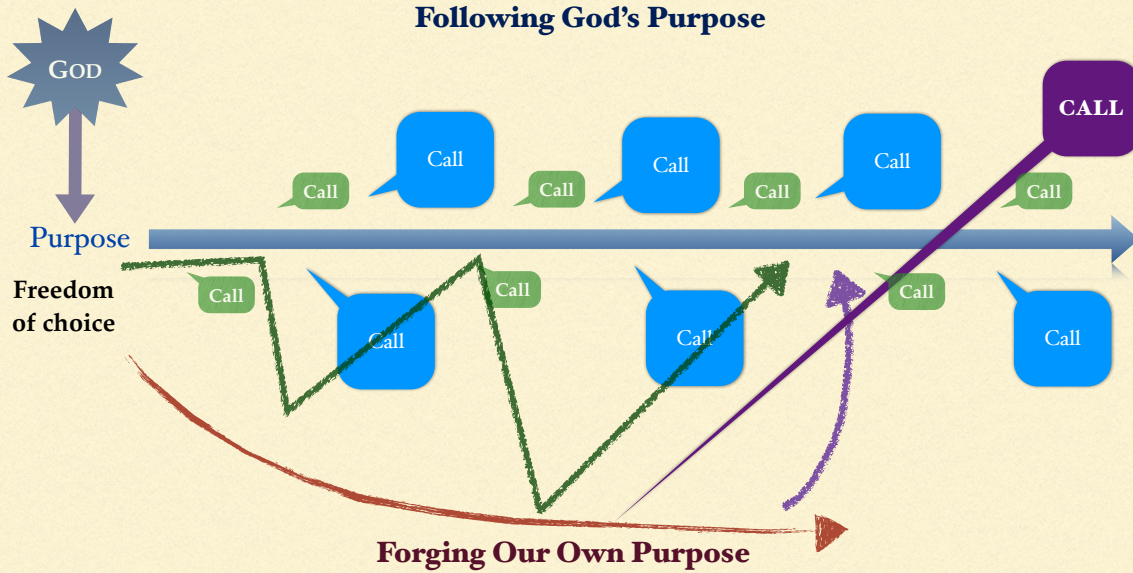
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*Thomas Kelly, The Eternal Promise*

Our task is not to work for [God], but to yearn for God to work through us and to join our sensitivity to God's working, already going on inside the lives of others. For wherever we go, there God has preceded us. To whomever we speak, God has first been speaking to her or him. And our task is to urge people to listen to their inner Teacher. Within all people the heavenly Educator is at work, tenderly, patiently, speaking inside of rich and poor, educated and ignorant, black and white. And the church's task is first of all to call men to a listening life, a life of internal listening to the inner promptings that are already going on.

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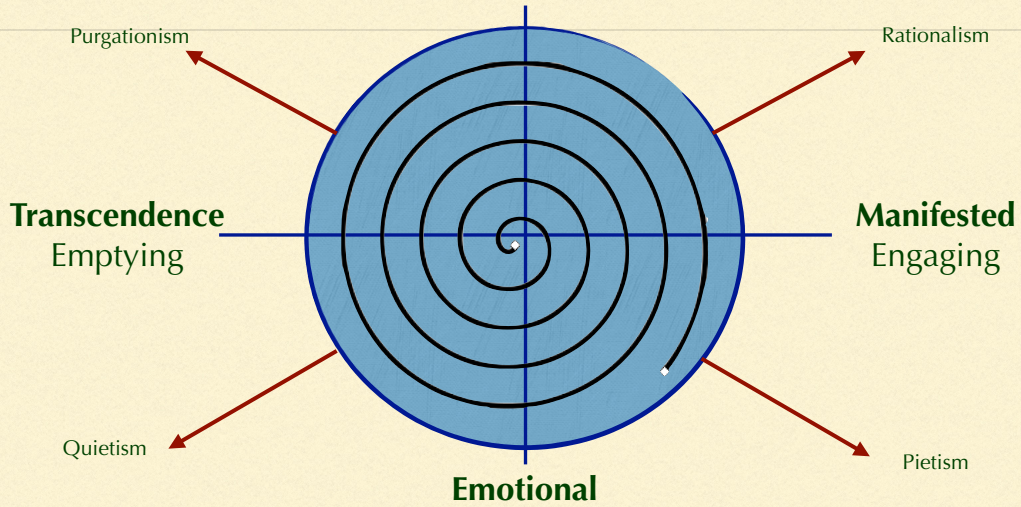
*We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28).*

## TITLE TEXT



- Anything that allows us to be deeply awake to and aware of God
- Anything that helps us to listen for, hear, and follow God.
- Anything that opens us to be transformed by God.

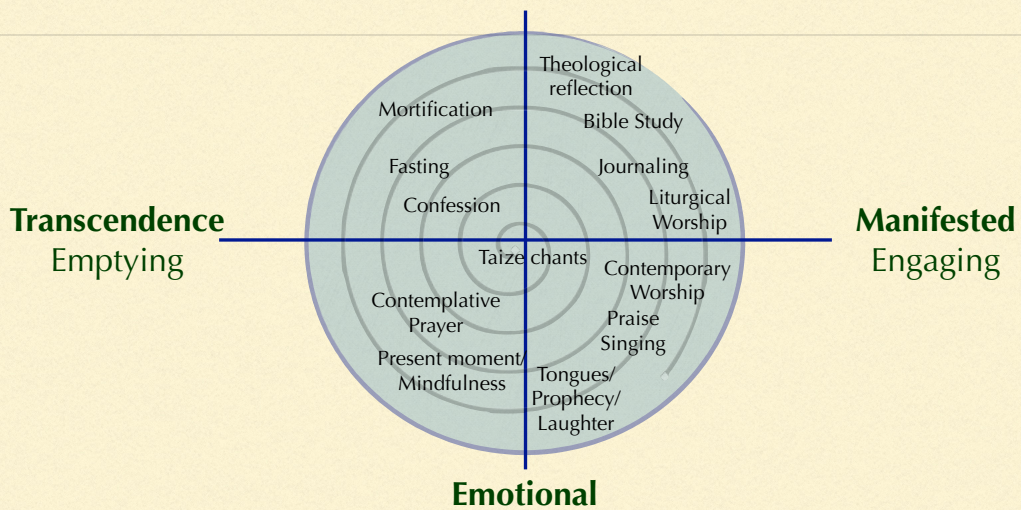
## SPIRITUAL ORIENTATIONS



Adapted from "Circle of Sensibilities," created by Urban Holmes, "A History of Christian Spirituality"



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## **DISCERNMENT MEANS STRUGGLING TO CONSTANTLY CHOOSE BETWEEN OUR WILL & GOD'S WILL**

- \* Every moment of discernment is a moment of uncertainty because it is a process of learning, experiencing, trial and error, and commitment...
- \* It is determining whether we want God's will, or are we just hoping God will ratify our will?
  - \* *Is the answer we are seeking really what God wants, or a guess or a hope?*
  - \* *Are we really available to hear God's will, or our emotions around our desire so strong that we are unavailable?*
  - \* *Strong emotions cloud our ability to discern, even if discernment includes emotions.*

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## HOW DO WE PRACTICE DISCERNMENT?

- A. **Center** and calm your mind, let go of emotions, and become open to whatever God might say—this means being willing to seek and accept an answer we don't want.
- B. **Ask** God for guidance
- \* Be specific.
  - \* Be persistent.
  - \* Be patient.
  - \* Be receptive
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## HOW DO WE PRACTICE DISCERNMENT?

- C. **Listen Prayerfully** for how God may speak to you directly, through conversations, music, art, poetry, nature, the Bible, the church, and life.
- D. **Sift** through possibilities:
- \* Consider all possibilities, and try to get a sense of what “seems” right (not just what makes rational sense).
  - \* Reject those that don't “seem” right, especially if you really know they are wrong.
  - \* Give it the test of time, so that even if you think something is right, keep asking prayerfully if this is what God wants.
  - \* Talk with others about what you sense God is saying, and get confirmation.
  - \* Always be ready to re-discern.
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## HOW DOES GOD USUALLY SPEAK TO US?

- Others, scripture, television, film, literature, art, etc...
- Inspirations
- Circumstances and experiences
- Symbols and metaphors.
- Signs
- A quiet voice within...

## HOW DO WE KNOW IF AN ANSWER IS FROM GOD

- Generally we get a sense of peace and calm, along with a conviction that it is "right."
- Coincidences and Providences will occur, suggesting that the present course is right.
- Things will seem to work out.
- These confirmations are mostly subtle, and rarely dramatic, which is why discernment gets harder in groups and boards.

## WHY DON'T I SEEM TO HEAR GOD?

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- **Our pride and ego may be interfering** ~ “what I want,” and not what God wants, may be getting in the way.
  - **We may be doing may already be what God wants**, and you just have to be patient and wait to see what God is going to do.
  - **We may be in a time of testing and transformation**, where God’s focus isn’t on answering us, but on deepening our faith.
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## *In-ness and Through-ness*

**Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy***

Jesus’ good news about the kingdom can be an effective guide for our lives only if we share his view of the world in which we live. To his eyes this is a God- bathed and God-permeated world. It is a world filled with a glorious reality, where every component is within the range of God’s direct knowledge and control – though he obviously permits some of it, for good reasons, to be for a while otherwise than as he wishes. It is a world that is inconceivably beautiful and good because of God and because God is always in it. It is a world in which God is continually at play and over which he constantly rejoices. Until our thoughts of God have found every visible thing and event glorious with his presence, the word of Jesus has not yet fully seized us.

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## *In-ness and Through-ness*

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**Jean-Pierre de Caussade, *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.

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## *In-ness and Through-ness*

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**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 this way before. I need something, and turn around to find it waiting for me. I must work, to be sure, but there is God working along with me. 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.

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## THOMAS KELLY, *A TESTAMENT OF DEVOTION*

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Deep within us all there is an amazing inner sanctuary of the soul, a holy place, a Divine Center, a speaking Voice, to which we may continuously return. Eternity is at our hearts, pressing upon our time-torn lives, warning us with intimations of an astounding destiny, calling us home unto Itself. Yielding to these persuasions, gladly committing ourselves in body and soul, utterly and completely, to the Light Within, is the beginning of true life. It is a dynamic center, a creative Life that presses to birth within us. It is a Light Within which illumines the face of God and casts new shadows and new glories upon the face of men. It is a seed stirring to life if we do not choke it. It is the Shekinah of the soul, the Presence in the midst. Here is the Slumbering Christ, stirring to be awakened, to become the soul we clothe in earthly form and action. And He is within us all.

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