



# THE HOLY LIGHT ACADEMY



## STEPPING STONES ALONG THE PATH



### *Devotion on the Path*

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.” –Matthew 22:37

At the heart of true spiritual devotion is your yearning and love for God. It’s that simple. This genuine devotion is the real catalyst that drives you forward on this spiritual path and guides your continuing inner unfoldment.

If your expression of spirituality seems lukewarm, has no enthusiasm in it, no life, no spirit, then you have no genuine devotion, then what you might have is just a practice of mental gymnastics. Intellectual spirituality leads to very limited progress and many religious followers go only this far. The function of the human mind alone is a very bleak prospect. It requires the heart to give it real life and zeal in any spiritual endeavor. When we discuss the Spiritual Disciplines, we also stress the need for Devotion, which is essentially the practice of balancing the mind and the heart. We have a triune force here: the Mind, the Heart, and the Union of both, which is the manifestation of genuine spiritual action.

The word devote stems from the Latin, *devovere*, which essentially means “to vow.” Webster’s Dictionary gives us further insight: “1. to give or apply (one’s time, attention, or self) entirely to a particular activity or cause. 2. To set apart for a specific purpose or use. 3. To set apart by or as if by a vow or solemn act.”

Spiritually then, to devote your life to God is to vow yourself to God, as an act of love for the Divine. True devotion is your vow to God to live a virtuous life for God’s sake and to seek only Him.

Devotion is focusing the heart and mind toward God, an attitude of reaching out in humility to the Divine Nature in Life. Hence this is the expression of the deepest of feelings, a sublime emotion of yearning from the depths of the soul, where the God-Self resides. This deep-seated yearning is a response to a divine call from within, a resonance with the most Holy One found in your heart of hearts. We can liken this to an echo. God calls forth, and the immediate echo is the human response. This equally reflects that we love God because God first loved us. His love for His children causes us to return love to Him. This is the act of true devotion. It is the soul yearning to be One with the Creator, One with the All. It is your longing for divine union with God through love, which the early contemplative mystics spoke of, and they could not have spoken of this so well unless they had experienced this to some degree. St. John of the Cross was such a mystic. Here is a quite profound passage from his classic work, *Living Flame of Love*:

*“The center of the soul is God; and, when the soul has attained to Him, according to the whole capacity of its being, and according to the force of its operation, it will have reached the last and the deep center of the soul, which will be when with all its powers it loves and understands and enjoys God; and so long as it attains not as far as this, although it be in God, Who is its center by grace and by His own communication, still, if it has the power of movement to go farther and strength to do more, and is not satisfied, then, although it is in the center, it is not in the deepest center, since it is capable of going still farther. Love unites the soul with God, and, the more degrees of love the soul has, the more profoundly does it enter into God and the more is it centered in Him; and thus we can say that, as are the degree of love of God, so are the centers, each one deeper than another, which the soul has in God.”*<sup>1</sup>

You can see here how this sincere devotion to God by your yearning and love for God will drive you inward, into the depths of your soul, where resides. Here is where the experience of this divine union begins, and this is the heart of true devotion.

In Christian Mysticism, your particular way of devotion to God is through the Master Jesus Christ, and your yearning and experience in this heartfelt expression is mystical in nature because it reaps results. It leads to a sincere relationship with Jesus Christ, and as you express communion with Christ, you come into union with Christ, and hence union with God. We cannot express enough the profound words of Jesus Christ, “I and my Father are one.”

God is felt in the sanctuary of your own heart by those who earnestly seek Him, who devote themselves to the application of divine wisdom and principles in all the various aspects of life. It is very much like the journey of the prodigal son, who in the end became contrite and humble, yearning to return to his awaiting Father, who met him halfway, eager for his long lost son to come back home. Likewise, the Beloved Father awaits your return, as he responds to your fervent prayer that expresses your devotion and your dedication to place God first in your life; hence, he extends to us our divine inheritance.

The Master Jesus lived a life of total devotion, for he offered himself completely as a vehicle of God's love and grace for all mankind. If you imitate him, reflect his example, follow in his footsteps, he will lead you to the most Beloved Father, for Jesus called his disciples to “take up your cross and follow me,” which demonstrates your true devotion. This process enables you to overcome your lower nature so that you are transfigured into sons and daughters of God.

“I beseech ye therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” –Romans 12:1

When you begin to truly feel this devotion and yearning in your heart, yearning toward the God within and toward the Master Jesus, you will begin to feel their love for you. Yes, they have always expressed their love for you, but when you open your heart, then you will experience it.

To clarify, the physical heart is the organ that pumps blood throughout the body. It has been used symbolically for the aspects of love and devotion. However, when we speak of the heart in the spiritual sense, this actually refers to the heart chakra, and it is this spiritual center that opens when you begin feeling love and devotion toward the Creator and the Master Jesus Christ.

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1 St. John of the Cross, *Living Flame of Love*, (Ligouri: Triumph Books), 25

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