



Ordinary Mysticism: Your Life as Sacred Ground

Study Questions – Week One

October 5 – 11, 2025

Based on “Ordinary Mysticism” by Mirabai Starr

What is a Mystic? (Intro / Page 1–2)

Quotes

To be a Mystic is to have a direct experience of the sacred. It is to experience the divine as an intimate encounter, rather than an article of faith.

A mystic is someone who skips over the intermediaries and goes straight to God.

Mysticism is not about concepts; it is about communion with ultimate reality. And, ultimate reality is not some faraway prize we claim when we have proved ourselves worthy to perceive it. Ultimate reality blooms at the heart of regular life. It shines through the cracks of our daily struggles and sings from the core of our deepest desires.

A mystic knows beyond ideas, feels deeper that emotions is fundamentally change by what is unchanging.

A mystic gazes through the eyes of love, and love reveals itself as the only true thing.

Mysticism is an intimate connection with Love Itself, orienting the whole of yourself toward the sacred.

1) In what ways do these images of being a mystic resonate or challenge you personally?

Organized Religion vs. Direct Experience (Page 3)

Quote: *“Organized religion can in fact be an obstacle to direct experience of the sacred. Most religious institutions insist that you purchase their brand of God and forsake all others.”*

2) Do you agree? Why or why not?

3) What obstacles - inner or outer – tend to prevent you from direct experience of God/the sacred in your daily life?

Transcendent & Immanent God (Pages 4-5)

Quote: *“My God transcends anything I could conceive of and lives inside of everything I know and do and am.”*

This statement highlights two ways people across traditions describe the Divine: **transcendence** and **immanence**.

“My God transcends anything I could conceive of” speaks to **transcendence** - the belief that God, or the Ultimate, is beyond human thought, language, and image/imagination. No doctrine, name nor image can contain the Infinite. Mystics in Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, and Buddhism all echo this idea: ultimate reality surpasses the limits of the human imagination.

“and lives inside of everything I know and do and am” points to **immanence** - the belief that God, or the sacred, is not distant but ever-present. The Divine is woven into our experiences, our relationships, and even our breath and very being. Christianity speaks of the Spirit within, Hinduism sees Brahman in all beings, and Buddhism affirms Buddha-nature in everyone.

Some lean heavily toward transcendence (seeing God as high above and separate), while others emphasize immanence (God in all things). This quote asks us to stretch into both truths at once.

Unity holds the paradox together: God is **infinite** (All-That-Is, without limit) and **intimate** (indwelling, present in every breath). To say “God is both Infinite and intimate / I AM” is to affirm both the mystery beyond all comprehension... and the presence of Spirit within all.

4) What words, images, or feelings shape your understanding of who or what God is?

Quote: James Finley says, *“If we are absolutely grounded in the absolute love of God that protects us from nothing even as it sustains us in all things, then we can face things with courage and tenderness and touch the hurting places in others and in ourselves with love.”*

Let’s look at James Finley’s paradox: *“Love protects us from nothing - even as it sustains us in all things.”*

- On one hand, love does **not shield** us from loss, grief, hurt, sickness, or the ordinary “struggles” of life. It doesn’t function as holy armor or special protection.
- On the other hand, love is what **carries us through** those very same experiences. It is the abiding Presence that makes endurance, healing, and transformation possible.

So, the paradox is this: Love, aka the very Presence of God - does not prevent suffering, yet it gives our suffering hope, grounding it in a larger reality. Love is the active Presence that sustains us in the midst of pain, and along the way, it has the power to heal and transform us.

5) When in your life have you discovered that love could not protect you from pain/loss, yet it sustained you through it?

Everyday Mysticism & Intention (Chapter 1)

Quote *“To be a mystic in our times is not about renunciation; it is about intention.”*

Starr sees intention as a **choice** - a conscious decision to align oneself with the mystical life, to treat one’s everyday life as sacred ground. In an interview, she says: *“So, intention is the beginning... one that happens again and again and again.”*

Intention isn’t a one-and-done; it’s repeated, returning, re-committing.

Intention is less about making a rigid plan and more about setting the compass of your heart. Ask: *What am I orienting toward today? Love? Presence? Compassion?*

Intention works best when it is tender, not tight. Whisper it to yourself as a blessing. Let it *guide you* rather than drive you.

Intention may not change your outer circumstances, but it slowly reshapes the way you see, respond, and live. Over time, it orients your whole being toward love.

6) How might intention affect your inner life even if your outer circumstances remain the same?

Take Home Soul Care

- **Reading for next week** – Chapter 2, “Ordinary Mysticism”

- **Mysticism in Practice**

~ **Reflect and/or write about this:**

God is infinite (beyond me); God is intimate (beside me); God is, I AM (my very Being).

~ **4 Minute Practice**

“Choose to see the face of God in the face of the bus driver and the moody teenager, in peeling a tangerine or feeding the cat. Decide. Mean it. Open your heart, and then do everything you can to keep it open.”

- Close your eyes and bring to mind someone very ordinary - it could be a bus driver, someone you pass by often, a grocery cashier, a neighbor, etc.
- Hold that person in your mind... breathe, and silently *see that person through the “eyes of love,”* imagining:
 - the hidden struggles or joys behind their face,
 - the sacred, divine presence within their being,

What if this is a threshold to the sacred? Let your heart open... and breathe with that possibility. Slowly, bring that awareness with you as you return to your day.

~ **Daily Practice**

At the start of the day, place your hand on your heart and ask: *“What is my deepest intention today?”* Identify it and say it aloud. Invite it to guide your day. Then, at bedtime, reflect a moment on that intention... and give thanks for the way it guided you today.