

Independence vs Intimacy: Tying things together

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Have you ever thought of yourself as a practical mystic? In Seminar 1 we looked at Larry Crabb's simple definition of the "spiritual life" as "a life that depends on the Spirit". So, is Christianity essentially mystical? (Dictionary definition: "belief that union with or absorption into the Deity, or the spiritual apprehension of knowledge inaccessible to the intellect, may be attained through contemplation and self-surrender." Richard Rohr defines mysticism very broadly and simply as "the experiential knowledge of God.")

If we look at the BIG PICTURE of how living the **Exchanged Life** fits into the Fall and the Redemption offered in the New Covenant from our rebellious self-determination and inability to love; this mystical, relationally dependent way of living out the Christian life represents the undoing of the self-centeredness of the Fall and the restoring of God-centeredness (think: moving from pre-Copernican circle 1 to Copernican circle 2). Since the Fall, our default is to live our lives as if there is no one outside ourselves -- no real Other who knows better than we what is good or bad for us. And even as Christians, we may **say** we believe in God, but we act much of the time like we're on our own -- expecting God to revolve around us and oblivious to our failures at love with one another. As we get tired of this, the Exchanged Life draws us more and more: Instead of determining for ourselves what is good and evil and what we will do at any given time, we learn to not rely on ourselves but wait to be led by God, wait to be filled and controlled by His Spirit... walking by faith not sight, relying on the sufficiency of Another who is real and outside the self and at the center of all things. In doing so, we enjoy real **intimacy** with God which leads us to practical worship (Bernard's stage 4 where worship becomes a life which revolves around Him as center). The alternative is some form of prideful, self-sufficient **independence** from God which, of necessity, requires us to be constantly using God and people and things for our own satisfaction, addictively trying to fill our "broken cisterns". With self at center, we are going to "suck". You and I have a choice every day between **intimacy** and **independence**. I can try to do things myself and arrange for my own protection and satisfaction and end up with nothing to show for it but broken cisterns... **Curved inward**...disconnected from God and others but paradoxically needy, with a strong **pull** to get others to fill me. Or we can live intentionally connected and dependent on the Source of love and paradoxically end up becoming "little Christs" - **curved outward, pouring** into others like mini fountains ...dependable sources of living water for others.

It's still a **faith** walk. We believe Him based on His word even if we don't see Him or feel Him. But here and there, as we live this way, He does lead us supernaturally and give us tastes... experiences of His presence. We can learn to make room for Him and rely on Him so it truly is "no longer I but Christ". **You** don't disappear this way, **you voluntarily lose yourself and end up becoming your truest self!** (See Rev 2:17 re the unique new name on white stone forged in the secret union between each believing, abiding human soul and Christ Himself.)