

# **John of the Cross for Today:** **Stages of Spiritual Development and Discernment**

Pope John Paul the Great Retreat, 2011  
Rosholt, Wisconsin

## **Have you ever asked any of these questions?**

- I feel that my early life damaged my chances to move forward. How do I get past this?
- Why is it that those who are the holiest suffer the most? How can a just God allow this?
- I used to feel so holy, but now I can hardly pray. Am I doing something wrong? Why is God allowing this?
- I have told God that I will do whatever He wants of me... and I wait... and wait... and He doesn't respond. What do I do now?
- How does one grow in the spiritual life? What are the stages?
- Can knowing something about stages in the spiritual life help me to not be so confused when the Lord is bringing me to a new level?
- How do I get started in the spiritual life?
- How do I grow in the spiritual life?
- I don't find my way of praying that I did five years ago satisfying anymore. What am I doing wrong?
- What are the consolations at each stage of growth in the spiritual life?
- What are the obstacles or trials at each level?
- What does it mean when I feel like I am going backwards in my spiritual life, but have no clue as to why? What do I do?
- How often will I have to go through a dry period? How can I go back to the relationship I used to have with Jesus?
- I can't believe that God would ask this much of me or anyone? Does He?
- I want to give everything to the Lord? What will it cost me?



**If you have asked these questions, let's listen to St. John of the Cross and his message for us today about how we are:**

**Created for Love**  
**Blessed but Broken**  
**Wounded by Love**  
**Healed by Love**

**The Three Ways of the Spiritual Life:**  
**Based on St. John of the Cross**

**Awakening**

**Purgative/Beginners**

**Illuminative/Proficients**

**Unitive/Perfect**

<b>First Conversion</b>	<b>Moral Conversion</b>	<b>Growing in Faith, Hope, and Love</b>	<b>Dark Night of the Senses</b>	<b>Charity to Others</b>	<b>Love of God</b>	<b>Dark Night of the Soul</b>	<b>Transforming Union with God</b>	<b>Examples Of Saints</b>
<p><b>Summary:</b></p> <p>Deep personal experience of God's love and our dignity as sons and daughters</p>	<p>Call in love to turn away from sin</p> <p>Approaching the God of Mercy in the Sacrament of Reconciliation</p> <p>Burning of the wet log</p>	<p>Growing trust which overcomes anxiety</p> <p>No longer seeking the consolations of God but the God of consolations</p>	<p>God reveals to us in love our deeper wounds which block us from receiving healing</p> <p>Active and passive purification of the senses and emotions</p>	<p>New freedom, peace, zeal, kindness, generosity and forgiveness</p> <p>Selfless love to serve Christ in those in need</p>	<p>The understanding to see all things in the light of God's love and plan</p>	<p>Active and passive purification of the deep-seated roots of sin in the intellect, memory, and will and at the very core of one's innermost center and soul</p> <p>Burning of the wet log to its very core until the wood is transformed into fire</p>	<p>A transformation into Christ as much as possible in this life</p>	<p>St. John of the Cross</p> <p>St. Teresa of Ávila</p> <p>St. Therese of Lisieux</p> <p>St. Edith Stein (Teresa Benedicta of the Cross)</p>
<p><b>Prayer:</b></p> <p>Personal and discursive</p>	<p>Finding the Lord in silence and in Meditation</p>	<p>Contemplative Meditation</p>	<p>Purgative Contemplation</p>	<p>Contemplation which leads to greater love and service to others</p>	<p>Contemplation as desire to just be in God's presence</p>	<p>Inability to pray in meditation nor contemplation. Quiet and faithful prayer in darkness and perseverance</p>	<p>Contemplation as total self-oblation to God in love</p>	<p>St. Thomas More</p> <p>Blessed Mother Teresa</p> <p>(Blessed) John Paul II</p>
<p><b>Scripture:</b></p> <p>John 1.38-39</p> <p>John 15.16</p> <p>Eph. 1.3-14</p>	<p>Matt.9.9-13</p> <p>Matt. 16.21-26</p>	<p>Mark 5.21-34</p> <p>I Cor. 13.1-13</p> <p>Matt. 7.7-11</p>	<p>Col. 3.5-11</p> <p>I Peter 1.6-9</p> <p>Hebrews 12.5-11</p>	<p>Col. 3.12-17</p>	<p>Phil. 3.7-16</p> <p>Phil. 4.4-9</p>	<p>James 1.2-4</p> <p>II Cor. 4.7-18</p>	<p>I Cor. 12.1-31</p> <p>Galatians 5.22-24</p> <p>Galatians 2.19-20</p> <p>John 17.21-26</p>	
<b>Spiritual Childhood</b>				<b>Spiritual Adolescence</b>			<b>Spiritual Maturity</b>	

# The Three Ways of the Spiritual Life:

## What St. John of the Cross Can Teach Us Today

### About Growth in Holiness and Discernment

Notes by Rev. Daniel Chowning O.C.D. and Rev. Joseph Hirsch

#### I. Awakening:

##### A. First Conversion:

1. A deep and personal experience God's love for me.
2. The dignity and beauty of the human person as a dwelling place of God.
3. God's dream for us is intimate communion with God and with one another.
4. This experience moves me to seek God in faith and love.
5. Prayer during this time becomes very personal and discursive. We become very aware that prayer places us face to face with the Lord at the level of the heart. There is enkindled an urgent longing for the Lord.
6. Scripture:
  - a. John 1.38-39: "'Rabbi, where do you stay?' 'Come and see', He answered."
  - b. John 15.16: "It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you..."
  - c. Ephesians 1.3-14: We are adopted sons and daughters of a loving Father.
7. Quote from St. John of the Cross: "Where have you hidden, Beloved, and left me moaning? You fled like a stag after wounding me; I went out calling you and you were gone." (SC, 1)

#### II. Purgative/Beginners

##### A. Moral Conversion

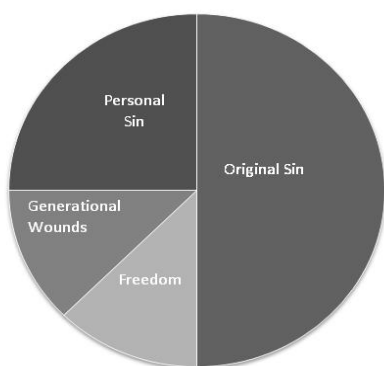
1. We have to come to know ourselves through reflection on our lives and allowing God to reveal to us who we are. We are called to make space for God amidst our life of distractions, so that we can listen and follow.
2. What are some of the obstacles which block God's love in our life? (e.g., lying, gossip, sexual misconduct, entertainment, drinking, drugs, which are all rooted in the Seven Capital Sins of Pride, Lust, Envy, Anger, Sloth, Greed, and Gluttony).
3. This awareness leads to making a commitment to purify one's moral behavior. What is God asking of me to change at this moment in my life? What are my sins, temptations, addictions, and compulsions which are obstacles which keep me from growing in my relationship with Christ?
4. How have I encountered God's mercy in the Sacrament of Confession as he calls me to Himself? How honest am I in revealing my vulnerability and how does this openness or lack of openness affect my healing and intimacy with God?
5. Prayer during this time:
  - a. Meditation is a reflective prayer—a discursive prayer which moves beyond our feelings and begins to integrate our head and heart in our relationship to God. It makes us aware of God's love and moves us to want to purify and reform our lives in discipleship.
  - b. Life has many anxieties and worries. As prayer develops, anxieties give way to a growing trust that God is a providential God who will take care of us in our needs, and the call to conversion is a call to grow in greater freedom to love.
  - c. It can often be helpful to have devotions such as the Rosary and prayers of others/saints to guide a person at this stage in learning how to meditate, to listen, and to speak with the Lord.
6. Scripture:
  - a. Matthew 9.9-13 The Call of Matthew.
  - b. Matthew 16.21-26 See as God sees and the conditions for discipleship.
7. Quote from St. John: "To undertake the journey to God the heart must be burned with the fire of divine love and purified of all creatures." (1A, 2.2)

##### B. Growing in Faith, Hope, and Love

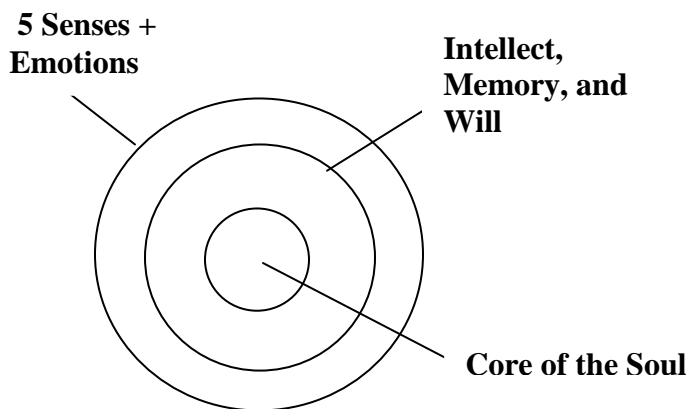
1. Faith is not just an intellectual assent but a living relationship with Jesus Christ.
2. Faith leads us to accept the mystery and obscurity of God. God cannot be captured by our thoughts, feelings or images of God. God is intimate, but transcendent more than anything we can understand.
3. Faith calls us to a trustful surrender to God.
4. We don't do this alone. We come to faith through others, are formed, supported and sustained through a faith community.
  - a. We are rooted in the Sacraments of the Church, the Scriptures, and the teaching of the Church.
  - b. We need the Eucharist for continued healing and conversion.
  - c. Adoration is the means of entering ever more deeply into intimacy with Jesus Christ.
5. In responding to God, it is important not to choose simply that which is good, when God may be calling to do something else or something better.
6. Prayer during this time:
  - a. Our meditation begins to become less thinking about and more open to contemplation—a listening and opening ourselves to the action and love of the Holy Spirit.

7. Scripture:
    - a. Mark 5.21-34 The woman with the hemorrhage: “It is your faith which has cured you.”
    - b. I Corinthians 13.1-13 Faith, Hope, and Love, but the greatest of these is Love.
    - c. Matthew 7.7-11 The power of prayer. God will supply all our needs.
  8. Quote from St. John: “Seek Him in faith and love. Faith and love are like the blind person’s guides. They will lead you along a path unknown to you, to the place where God is hidden.”
- C. Dark Night of the Senses purification of the senses (hear, smell, taste, see, and touch) and the emotions (joy, hope, fear, and sorrow).
1. God takes us through a process of healing and transformation. This process is what John of the Cross calls the Dark Night of the Senses and of the Spirit. God communicates His loving knowledge to us. We experience it first as darkness and painful, because God is so different than we are—He comes in mystery and transcendence. God is goodness and purity and we are not. As bright light is painful to those in the dark, so too, the experience of God’s healing love seems painful. We can speak of God’s love as “wounding us”.
  2. The first way that that the Dark Night of the Senses becomes evident is that our relationship with God begins to change. In the beginning of the spiritual life, it is common that people experience prayer as easy and consoling. Virtue comes easy. We feel gratified and loved by God. But when God begins to lead us in a deeper relationship with Himself, the former way of praying no longer satisfies. It feels like the Lord withdraws that consolation when we pray or in our relationships with one another. If we had a job we liked in serving others, maybe that begins to dry up and becomes a drudgery. It seems like we are going backwards, when in fact we are moving forward in a way we don’t realize. The important thing here is to discern that this is an action of God and that despite the lack of consolation or satisfaction in prayer, there remains a deep desire to love and serve God. The reason that God takes us to this new depth is to teach us to love the God of consolations, and not simply the consolations of God. If our faith relies simply on the consolations of God we will never move beyond spiritual childhood.
  3. On the other hand, someone might feel the absence of God in their life, and think they are experiencing the Dark Night, when in fact it is not the Dark Night at all, but rather it is the experience of guilt and shame, because the person is in a state of serious sin. The feeling of desolation is the result of a moral life which is contrary to where God is leading.
  4. The Dark Night begins to shatter the illusions we have about ourselves. We realize that we are not as loving or holy as we thought we were. This is an action of God. This process is an experience of being enlightened to those areas in our life where we are most wounded. All that is broken, our fears, repressed angers, painful past memories, illicit sexual experiences, the Holy Spirit enlightens us to the deeper hurts and sinful patterns of our life. It is like God takes a powerful flashlight into our spiritual basement and reveals to us the dirt and cobwebs. God may permit temptations to buffet the person under trial—temptations to lust, fornication, scrupulosity, self-doubt, indecision, and blasphemy.
  5. The purpose of the Dark Night is to heal and restore our capacity to love, which were lost through Original Sin, Personal sin, and wounds received throughout our lifetime. The Dark Night is not just done once, but is rather a process which takes place throughout our lifetime, through experiences which stretch us and open us to receive God’s grace and love in our lives.
  6. There is an active purification which happens within us. It is active insofar as we cooperate with God’s grace to bring about transformation in our lives. There are some roots of sinful attachment in our souls which cannot simply be removed by living our regular lives of faith. In order to work more deeply to remove these roots, the Lord works in us in what is called a passive purification. At these times all we can do is to keep our eyes radically fixed on Jesus and to surrender to Him in total Faith, Hope, and Love. The challenge is to let God carry us. St. John calls this a denudation, an emptying of oneself, a poverty of spirit. Only when we have become emptied can we be ready to be filled with God’s grace and healing.
  7. God’s love enlightens us. All has to be brought forward to be seen and felt so that we can give this to God and be healed. The more we let Him do this work in us and trust that God loves us no matter who we are and what we’ve done, and we continue to pray and persevere, and continue to share our heart with trusted others, and to receive the Sacraments, God will heal us of these wounds. This implies that we need a spiritual director or confessor. This is the contemplative experience. As we allow Jesus to come into those deepest dimensions of our soul and to touch them, we come to know, like the sinners and those healed, that God loves us as we are and not as we think we ought to be.
  8. As we move from the old man to become the new man, we are called to move from our natural way to knowing and loving and being in this world to a divine way of knowing, loving, and being in this world. St. John of the Cross gives the example of the wet log placed into a fire:
    - a. “Before the divine fire is introduced into the substance of the soul and united with it through perfect and complete purgation and purity, its flame, which is the Holy Spirit, wounds the soul by destroying and consuming the imperfections of its bad habits. And this is the work of the Holy Spirit, in which he disposes it for divine union and transformation in God through love.”
    - b. “The very fire of love that afterward is united with the soul, glorifying it, is what previously assailed it by purging it, just as the fire that penetrates a log of wood is the same that first makes an assault on the wood, wounding it with the flame, drying it out, and stripping it of its unsightly qualities until it is so disposed that it can be penetrated and transformed into the fire.”
    - c. “The will does not experience the savor of the flame because it does not feel this flame within itself; it only feels what it does have within itself—its own misery.”

- d. “This flame previously oppressed the soul in an indescribable way, since contraries were battling contraries: God, who is all perfect, against all the imperfections of the soul. God does this so, by transforming the soul into himself, he might soften, pacify, and illumine it, as does fire when it penetrates the log of wood.”
9. The cross section of the log shows the influence of sin in our lives:
- We were created to be in union and freedom with God and others, but that freedom has been compromised and lessened due to sin. In the diagram below one half of the total freedom has been wounded through Original Sin. Another part has been wounded by our own personal sin and another part through the sins of others against us—we can call that generational wounds or baggage. There remains the small wedge of our freedom. As we are healed from our sins and imperfections, our freedom increases and the hold sin has over us lessens.
  - As we allow God to enter into our souls, He is able to heal us at ever deeper levels. At the outer core of our life, we experience the world through our five senses and the basic emotions. To the degree that these are not ordered to God, we will experience God’s purifying love as painful. At the next level we experience life through the powers of our soul—intellect, memory, and will. These too need to be purified and conformed to God through His healing love. At the very core is our very soul where we experience the very presence of God at the deepest level. The Dark Night of the Senses begins the purification at the outer levels of our soul.



**Figure A**



**Figure B**

10. Prayer during this time:
- Meditation is no longer fruitful. God is communicating Himself more at the level of the Spirit than the Senses. We can speak of a Purgative Contemplation which is an inflow of God’s grace into our soul which enlightens us to the need of deeper healing, but seems to us disconcerting, because we experience it as a lack of consolation, a dryness, as purgative because of God’s transcendence/obscurity. Faithfulness in prayer is required.
11. Scripture:
- Colossians 3.5-11 “Put to death whatever in your nature is rooted in earth.”
  - I Peter 1.6-9 Rejoice in trials as God purifies our faith.
  - Hebrews 12.5-11 As a father disciplines his son, so too, God the Father disciplines His children.
12. Quote from St. John: “One dark night, fired with love’s urgent longings – ah, the sheer grace! I went out unseen, my house being now all still.”(DN, 1)

### III. Illuminative/Proficients:

#### A. Charity toward others

- After a period of purification that takes place in the first Dark Night of the senses, there comes a time of relative peace and consolation.
- There breaks into our life a new freedom which goes on for a while, where we begin to experience a transformation in our life. There is a closer intimacy with God and deeper awareness and resting in His love.
- In our relationship with other people we become less judgmental and more compassionate, more realistic (humble self-knowledge) about our strengths and weaknesses. More respectful of God, less angry, more trusting, more accepting of other people’s differences, not trying to control other people, willingness to carry the cross that comes to us in life. These are the fruits.
- Life becomes more simple; all that matters is to try to live day by day for the love of God and neighbor.
- Persons will not count the cost of taking care of those in physical or spiritual need. They will attempt very difficult acts of charity. The test will be the fruit of remaining in God’s presence.
- Prayer during this time
  - Prayer becomes more contemplative—increased calm and quiet. Prayer becomes resting in God’s presence and allowing God to love us. It is God praying in us.

- b. Prayer leads persons to serve others more radically out of love of God and trust that He will guide them in their mission.
- c. To live a Eucharistic life means learning to love others as God loves us (Matthew 5-7). As Jesus gives Himself to us, we are called to give our lives to one another. Example of Dorothy Day at the moment of Consecration in the Mass: *“This is my Body broken for you. Will you let your body be broken for me and for others? ... This is my Blood poured out for you. Will you let your blood be poured out for Me and for others?”*

7. Scripture:

- a. Colossians 3.12-17 The practice of virtues.

- 8. Quote from St. John: “A soul enkindled with love is a gentle, meek, humble, and patient soul.” (M. 29) “Lord, you return gladly and lovingly to lift up the one who offends you, but I do not turn to raise and honor the one who annoys me. (M. 47)

B. Love of God

- 1. Persons have a much deeper sense and ability to see all things in the light of God as our beginning and end. They grow in the Gift of Understanding, which makes it possible to put all things of this life in proper perspective in relation to God and see the interconnection between various truths of faith, which were not as obvious before.
- 2. An abiding sense of God’s presence in all things is an immense grace, which is given only gradually. It is an awareness of God’s presence and a willingness to do all things for love of Him in a spirit of radical humility and surrender.
- 3. It is part of the strange paradox that as we get closer to God, we realize more and more how far we are from His holiness and perfection. We become more aware of the gravity of former and present sins, and at the same time grow in hope and trust as “forgiven sinners”.
- 4. Prayer during this time:
  - a. Prayer is generally easier and more contemplative because of the Gift of love of God. There is a growing desire to be in God’s presence.
  - b. Liturgical prayer will be filled with more reverence and awe. Persons will be more attracted to liturgy which is more quiet and prayerful.
  - c. Devotions such as the Rosary will be prayed in a very different manner than before.
- 5. Scripture:
  - a. Philippians 3.7-16 All is considered loss in the light of Christ. I am grasped by Christ.
  - b. Philippians 4.4-9 Dismiss all anxiety, and the peace of God will stand over your hearts and minds.
- 6. Quote from St. John: “Love is not feeling great things, but in having great nakedness and suffering for the Beloved.” (M) “Nothing is obtained from God except by love.” (SC, 1.13)

C. Dark Night of the Soul (Purification of the Intellect, Memory, and Will)

- 1. The Dark Night of the Soul transforms us at the deepest level of our being. It discloses at a profound level our finiteness, contingency, and mortality. The darkness comes from the transcendence of God and the dissimilarity between God and the human person. In the Dark Night of the Spirit God recreates the soul and establishes her original capacity for God. Her human way of acting and loving is changed to a divine way.
- 2. The Dark Night is incarnated in daily life. It is not an esoteric experience in prayer that is unrelated to life; rather it involves a combat situated in daily life. Furthermore, the Dark Night is conditioned by a variety of internal and external circumstances such as the psychological issues the person has to work out, sinful patterns in their life, circumstances in which we live.
- 3. God’s purifying grace works in multiple ways: temptations, failures, conflictual relationships, physical and mental fragility, illnesses, and loneliness. God can use anything and any circumstance, even sin, to bring us back to Himself.
- 4. There is a temptation to give up the pursuit of the spiritual life at this point. It is essential to remain quiet and faithful.
- 5. We are sustained by the hope and expectation that the purification will lead us to genuine contemplative prayer.
- 6. Consider again the burning log to show how the fire of the Holy Spirit needs to penetrate to the very core of the soul to purge away the deepest roots of sin and imperfection. Unless the deepest roots are purged true freedom and healing will not be attained.
- 7. Prayer during this time:
  - a. There is an inability to meditate or make reflections or contemplation. It is essential to remain quiet and faithful.
  - b. Persons are sustained by the hope and expectation that the purification will lead to genuine contemplative prayer. There is a temptation to give up the pursuit of the spiritual life at this point. It is essential to remain quiet and faithful.
- 8. Scripture:
  - a. James 1.2-4 Trials and tests lead to endurance which lead to perfection and maturity.
  - b. II Corinthians 4.7-18 As earthen vessels we possess a treasure; we are afflicted but never despair.
- 9. Quote from St. John: “A soul that is hard because of self-love grows harder. O good Jesus, if you do not soften it, it will ever continue in its natural hardness.” (M. 30-31)

IV. Unitive/Perfect

A. Transforming Union with God

- 1. The Unitive way is a transformation into Christ as much as possible in this life.
- 2. An increasing deepening in love. All we do, we do with love. All we suffer, we suffer with love.

3. Freedom: We are no longer afraid of what people think of us. We proclaim the Gospel irregardless of rejection. We willingly embrace the cross of Christ irregardless of the price.
4. There is a freedom to forgive even those who most oppose us; for example, at the end of St. John’s life, he was persecuted because he stood up in defense of other people and he died in a monastery where the Prior was against him. He wasn’t bitter nor angry toward those who inflicted the injustice against him. When a Carmelite nun wrote to him lamenting the way he was treated, he replied in this way: *“Do not let what is happening to me cause you any grief, for it does not cause me any. What greatly grieves me is that the one who is not at fault is blamed. Men do not do these things, but God who knows what is suitable for us and arranges things for our good. Think nothing else that God ordains all, and where there is no love, put love, and you will draw out love.”*
5. Prayer during this time:
  - a. Father Benedict Groeschel, in his explanation of the Three Ways, states that at the Purgative stage the beginner is standing in cold water in the wading section of the pool. In the Illuminative stage the person is in the deep end of the pool and is treading water but has learned how to trust that God will supply the grace needed. In the Unitive stage the person is in the middle of the ocean during a total tempest. This stage requires total surrender in the face of the infinity and obscurity of a loving God. The prayer at this level is the most faithful, most trusting, and most loving with a love which is agape—a total self-oblation to God in love.
6. Scripture:
  - a. I Corinthians 12.1-31 The Spiritual Gifts in the Body of Christ
  - b. Galatians 5.22-24 Fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity and chastity.
  - c. Galatians 2.19-20 “The life I live is not my own; Christ is living in me.”
  - d. John 17.21-26 “May all be one as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You.”
7. Quote from St. John: “I would not consider any spirituality worthwhile that that wants to walk in sweetness and ease and run from the imitation of Christ. Christ is our model and light.” (2A, 7.8-9)

B. Examples of Saints:

1. Mother Teresa of Calcutta: Compare the text of Psalm 22 and a letter written by Mother Teresa to her spiritual director:

<b>Psalm 22</b>	<b>Mother Teresa</b>
<p>My God, my God, why have you forsaken me, far from my prayer, from the words of my cry? O my God, I cry out by day, and you answer not; by night, and there is no relief for me. Yet you are enthroned in the holy place, O glory of Israel! In you our fathers trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them. To you they cried, and they escaped; in you they trusted, and they were not put to shame. But I am a worm, not a man; the scorn of men, despised by the people. All who see me scoff at me; they mock me with parted lips, they wag their heads: “He relied on the Lord; let him deliver him, let him rescue him, if he loves him.” You have been my guide since I was first formed, my security at my mother’s breast. To you I was committed at birth, from my mother’s womb you are my God.</p> <p>Be not far from me, for I am in distress; be near, for I have no one to help me.</p> <p>(20) But you, O Lord, be not far from me; O my help, hasten to aid me. Rescue my soul from the sword my loneliness from the grip of the dog.</p> <p>(23) I will proclaim your name to my brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will praise you: “You who fear the Lord, praise him; all you descendants of Jacob, give glory to him; revere him, all you</p>	<p>Lord, my God, who am I that You should forsake me? The child of your love—and now become as the most hate one—the one You have thrown away as unwanted—unloved. I call, I cling, I want—and there is no One to answer—no One on Whom I can cling—no, No One.—Alone. The darkness is so dark—and I am alone.—Unwanted, forsaken.—The loneliness of the heart that wants love is unbearable.—Where is my faith?—even deep down, right in, there is nothing but emptiness and darkness.—My God—how painful is this unknown pain. It pains without ceasing.—I have no faith.—I dare not utter the words and thoughts that crowd in my heart—and make me suffer untold agony. So many unanswered questions live within me—I am afraid to uncover them—because of the blasphemy—If there be God, —please forgive me.—Trust that all will end in Heaven with Jesus.—When I try to raise my thoughts to Heaven—there is such convicting emptiness that those very thoughts return like sharp knives and hurt my very soul.—Love—the word—it brings nothing. —I am told God loves me—and yet the reality of darkness and coldness and emptiness is so great that nothing touches my souls. Before the work started—there was so much union—love—faith—trust—prayer—sacrifice.—Did I make the mistake in surrendering blindly to the call of the Sacred Heart? The work is not a doubt—because I am convinced that it is His not mine.—I don’t feel—not even a single simple thought or temptation enters my heart to claim anything in the work.</p> <p>The whole time smiling—Sisters and people pass such remarks.—They think my faith, trust and love are filling my very being and that the intimacy with God and union to His will must be absorbing my heart.—Could they but know—and how my cheerfulness is the cloak by which I cover the emptiness and misery.</p>

descendants of Israel! For he has not spurned nor disdained the wretched man in his misery, Nor did he turn his face away from him, but when he cried out to him, he heard him.” So by your gift will I utter praise in the vast assembly; I will fulfill my vows before those who fear him...

(30) And to him my soul shall live; my descendants shall serve him. Let the coming generation be told of the Lord that they may proclaim to a people yet to be born the justice he has shown.

In Spite of all—this darkness and emptiness is not as painful as the longing for God.—The contradiction I fear will unbalance me.—What are You doing My God to one so small? When You asked to imprint Your Passion on my heart—is this the answer?

If this brings You glory, if You get a drop of joy from this—if souls are brought to You—if my suffering satiates Your Thirst—here I am Lord, with joy I accept all to the end of life—and I will smile at Your Hidden Face—always.”

*(Mother Teresa, Come Be My Light, pp. 186-188)*

### **Other Quotes of St. John of the Cross:**

1. Though the path is plain and smooth for people of good will, those who walk it will not travel far, and will do so only with difficulty if they do not have good feet, courage, and tenacity of spirit.
2. It is better to be burdened and in company with the strong than to be unburdened and with the weak.
3. Those who fall alone remain alone in their fall, and they value their soul little since they entrust it to themselves alone.
4. Deny your desires and you will find what your heart longs for. For how do you know if any desire of yours is according to God?
5. The soul that in aridity and trial submits to the dictates of reason is more pleasing to God than one that does everything with consolation, yet fails in this submission.
6. The fly that clings to honey hinders its flight, and the soul that allows itself attachment to spiritual sweetness hinders its own liberty and contemplation.
7. Since God is inaccessible, be careful not to concern yourself with all that your faculties can comprehend and your sense feel, so that you do not become satisfied with less and lose the lightness of soul suitable for going to him.
8. The soul that journeys to God, but does not shake off its cares and quiet its appetites, is like one who drags a cart uphill.
9. What does it profit you to give God one thing if he asks of you another? Consider what it is God wants, and then do it. You will as a result satisfy your heart better than with something toward which you yourself are inclined.
10. We must adjust our trials to ourselves, and not ourselves to our trials.
11. What does anyone know who doesn't know how to suffer for Christ.

### **St. John's Instructions for Climbing to the Summit of the Mount**

**To reach satisfaction in all, desire its possession in nothing.**

**To come to possess all, desire the possession of nothing.**

**To arrive at being all, desire to be nothing.**

**To come to the knowledge of all, desire the knowledge of nothing.**

**To come to the pleasure you have not, you must go by a way in which you enjoy not.**

**To come to the knowledge you have not, you must go by a way in which you know not.**

**To come to the possession you have not, you must go by a way in which you possess not.**

**To come to be what you are not, you must go by a way in which you are not.**

**For to go from all to the All, you must deny yourself of all in all.**

**And when you come to the possession of the all, you must possess it without wanting anything.**

**Because if you desire to have something in all, your treasure in God is not purely your all.**

**In this nakedness the spirit finds its quietude and rest.**

**For in coveting nothing, nothing raises it up,**

**and nothing weighs it down, because it is in the center of its humility.**

**When it covets something, in this very desire it is wearied. (AMC, I, 13[11])**