



2.5.2 My Personal Experience with the Dark Night of the Soul

I had returned to practicing Zen meditation and traditional Christian prayers for some time. But I longed for a more direct experience of God. Deep down, I was already in a crisis of faith and felt desperate inside. I wanted to make a new attempt to enter into deeper prayer.

So I changed the way I practiced Zen meditation. What began as pure mindfulness meditation turned into a contemplation of God's presence. With every breath, I became aware that God is present in this very moment. I used a kind of mantra with the phrase:

"God is here now."

I practiced this prayer daily for about 90 minutes.

I had read and learned so much about God, but I wanted to free myself from all those concepts and encounter God as He truly is. I no longer wanted to confine Him to a box of thoughts and ideas.

I said to Him, "Even if you are not a good and loving God - I still want to experience you as you truly are."

Over time, a feeling developed in this form of prayer that is difficult to put into words. It was as if I were sitting alone in a pitch-black, cold hall on a concrete floor. I felt empty and lonely. This feeling grew stronger over the following weeks and months.

The hall seemed to grow larger, the floor colder, the surroundings darker.

I pleaded silently with God for a sign - but nothing came. No light, no spark, no sound, no feeling.

Only complete silence, deepest darkness, and absolute emptiness.

Eventually, the hall expanded so vastly that it seemed to encompass the entire universe. I was alone in this infinite darkness.

No sign of God.

I asked myself why God couldn't at least give me a small sign, since I was so desperately begging Him. During that time, I wrestled with Him. Sometimes, I even doubted His existence.

Then God led me to a group that practiced the Prayer of the Heart - which was, in essence, exactly what I had already been doing for half a year. There, someone recommended a book in which I read a passage about the seemingly silent God.

It was a great relief to learn that other contemplative Christians had gone through similar

experiences.

Some time later, I came to understand what God was trying to show me through this darkness.

God is within me

Even though I was deeply immersed in prayer, I had still been looking for God outside of myself. I wanted a perceptible sign from Him. I had often read in the teachings of Sun Myung Moon that God dwells in the innermost heart - but I hadn't truly internalized this in my meditation.

It's possible to meditate without truly turning inward.

Only when I began to consciously learn this, a kind of heart meditation developed. The feeling of abandonment disappeared. Instead, a quiet, silent joy settled in my heart.

God cannot be directly perceived through the five senses

Later, I also realized that I wanted to perceive God through my senses.

But Buddha teaches that even our perceptions are empty. And Sun Myung Moon says that not even in the spirit world can God be directly perceived - for He is pure spirit, without form.

We become aware of the presence of God through an expansion of our consciousness and through our spiritual sensitivity. I will describe my experiences with this in a later chapter.

These were the lessons I was able to internalize through this "dark night of the soul." They led me on the path inward and formed the foundation for the experiences I will describe over the course of Chapter 2.

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