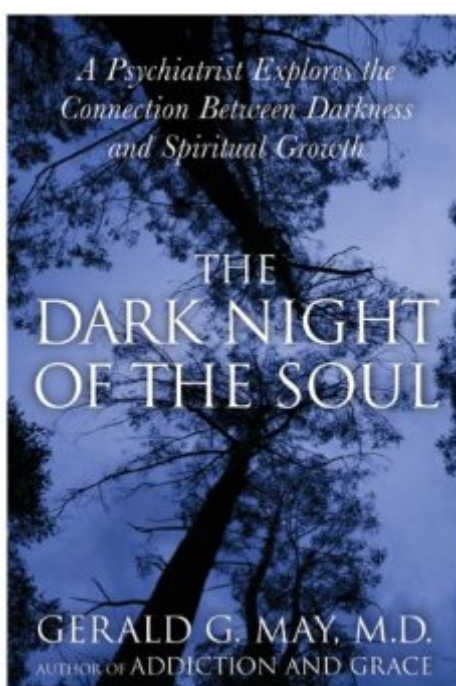


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The Dark Night Of The Soul: A Psychiatrist Explores The Connection Between Darkness And Spiritual Growth



Synopsis

Now in paperback: a distinguished psychiatrist, spiritual counsellor and bestselling author shows how the dark sides of the spiritual life are a vital ingredient in deep, authentic, healthy spirituality. Gerald G. May, MD, one of the great spiritual teachers and writers of our time, argues that the dark 'shadow' side of the true spiritual life has been trivialised and neglected to our serious detriment. Superficial and naively upbeat spirituality does not heal and enrich the soul. Nor does the other tendency to relegate deep spiritual growth to only mystics and saints. Only the honest, sometimes difficult encounters with what Christian spirituality has called and described in helpful detail as 'the dark night of the soul' can lead to true spiritual wholeness. May emphasises that the dark night is not necessarily a time of suffering and near despair, but a time of deep transition, a search for new orientation when things are clouded and full of mystery. The dark gives depth, dimension and fullness to the spiritual life.

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Customer Reviews

This is a beautifully written book by a man who has experienced darkness as someone who

struggled with Cancer. Sadly, he did pass away after writing this book from Heart failure which he mentions. He explains in great detail the mystical perspectives of St. Theresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross. How in their spiritual journey, often times they were overwhelmed by darkness however it was God's way of preparing them for something greater. My Aunt suffered from terminal stage 4 cancer and in facing death, she had such grace as to offer me advice on how to appreciate my own life, which I will be forever grateful for. This is a must read book for therapists, social workers and mental health care professionals of all types, especially informative for those dealing with grief counseling. Gerald May was able to touch on a spiritual perspective that so few people are ever understand and his writing is absolutely inspiring to me.

May's *The Dark Night of the Soul* is remarkable. To me and my spouse, May's book is a perfect combination of psychiatrist's perspective transposed over a spiritual experience. I really appreciate May's "interpretation" of John of the Cross and Theresa of Avila's seminal works. I have tried to read some of their original writings - along with other Christian mystics - and the ancient grammar, syntax and vocabulary make their works less than convenient for the modern reader to sort through. May has done all the sorting and more; making their immensely wise observations of the dark night, perceptible and recognizable. I also noted May's important distinction - apart from other writer's of *The Dark Night* - that dark night is not usually a single event, but more likely an ongoing experience of spiritual encounter with God.

OH, this book is so great! I have turned back to it time and time again. It is not just a one time read - it continues to edify throughout all stages of spiritual growth. If you are already acquainted with St John of The Cross and basics of Christian mysticism and looking for some much needed insight into how to make sense of confusing battles and struggles within your soul - this book will be a BLESSING to you! I am very thankful to have found this book.

It is too bad that many folks will discount this book because it is (was) written by a psychiatrist. It is equally bad that many Protestants will avoid the book because of its Catholic heritage. I believe that even worse still, there will be those who miss the wisdom inside the pages of this book, who could benefit from the guidance and spiritual insight during their seasons of the dark night."At the outset I must confess that I am no longer very good at telling the difference between good things and bad things." -*The Dark Night of the Soul*; Gerald May, M.D. I rather wish the title of this book had been different. I think it gives a false impression of what the subject really explores; although, it does

address the dark night of the soul. May uses the backdrop of the writings from St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross to lay his foundation for his exploration of the phenomenon of the "dark night" or spiritual darkness (which might also be known as spiritual awakening or enlightenment). I have read quite extensively from both Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross. Their writings can be something of a bit archaic depending on the translation and they can be somewhat romanticized within the context of their poetic settings. I say this to make a point that they can sometimes be difficult to completely understand. Despite his academic and clinical background, Dr. May writes clearly and in a very personal voice that I find very easy to grasp. His writing is warm, friendly, and very down-to-earth. He takes complex ideas and difficult situations and makes easy conversation with them. Not only was I enlightened by what I read, I was also comforted by someone whom I believe shared understanding of my circumstances and experiences. What might be the greatest contribution of this book in my opinion is the synergy that Dr. May creates between the spirit and the psyche... perhaps another way of saying this is the convergence of the soul and the spirit. While some voices would discount the science of psychology, I believe it is helpful for us to understand the workings of the mind and soul. God instructs us to love Him with all our "heart, soul, mind, and strength." It is obvious then, we should pay attention to these various facets that make up the essence of human beings. It is my opinion that Gerald May handles this material with humility and reverence, which helps in bringing attention to the work of God in the process of the dark night. It might be for this reason that I most liked chapter five, Three Signs and Three Spirits, where May teaches at length about the psychology of the dark night... very, very good instruction here. "As John makes clear, it is not God who disappears, but only our concepts, images, and sensations of God." -The Dark Night of the Soul; Gerald May (p.146) Another very helpful chapter to me was chapter six, The Dark Night Today, where May discusses the dark night in modern contexts. While there is no substitute for reading the translated original writings from John and Teresa, Dr. May's exploration is arguably one of the best companion guides I have read to date and I have several expositions on the writings of Teresa and John in my personal library. The book includes a very well annotated notes section and an exhaustive index at the end of the book. Personally, I think this is a book every Christian should read and I am very glad I did.

It really helped me comprehend it better - something I had been trying for years on my own. Great book overall. I was skeptical because the author was a psychiatrist but after reading I see he was deeply spiritual and a man of the heart. He doesn't try to reduce spirituality to a matter of the psyche.

The dark night and related soul transformation was an unfamiliar school of thought to me. Through his experience with psychiatric practices and psychological therapy, Dr May discusses meditation and contemplation and its role in our spiritual journeys from darkness into light. This book draws from many rich sources of research, writings, and spiritual oracles and leaders. I highly recommend this to anyone unfamiliar with the dark night, or Teresa or John, or who desire to know more about related spiritual contemplation and healing.

I'm taking my time with this wonderful book. I have a Masters in Theology, am a Chaplain, and work with women in recovery who are rebuilding their lives. Understanding the "gifts" of our dark times can be healing. It was for me. I've also gained a greater interest in studying Saint John of the Cross and Saint Teresa of Avila.

The most uplifting and faith building book about God's interaction with his creation I have read to date. It is as if God is speaking through Gerald May directly to God in my soul. I must immediately read it again.

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