

## Religion Versus Spirituality

Ron Pappalardo  
September 10, 2015



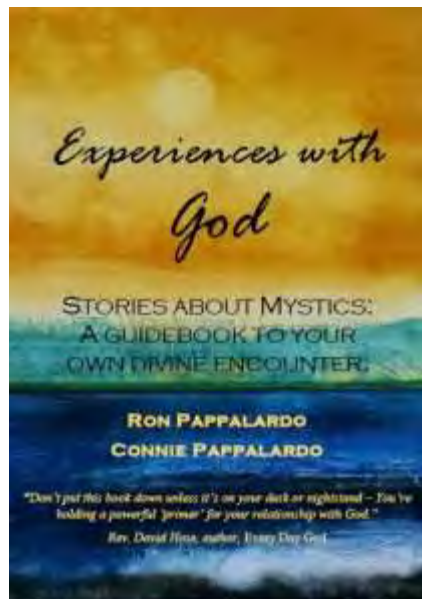
### *The Introduction to Experiences with God by Ron and Connie Pappalardo*

Throughout history, religion has played a central role in the human story, and yet, the state of the human race today causes people to wonder sometimes if religion has been more of a curse than a blessing. A great deal of conflict results from the different approaches people take in their religious beliefs. Sometimes these conflicts fuel violence and wars. Nevertheless, religion at its best inspires people to live exemplary lives of great empathy, compassion, and service to others.

Mother Teresa, Albert Schweitzer, Mohandas K. Gandhi, and Martin Luther King immediately come to mind, but there are countless others throughout history who have been deeply moved and inspired through religion. Today, the word religion can trigger such negative reactions that many people will say, “I’m spiritual, not religious.” In this book, we will employ the words spiritual and spirituality much more often than the word religious, but first, we’d like to explore the essence of the word religion, because there is a lesson for us all here.

### **Religion at it’s best is spiritually rich**

While many people have become sour with religion, especially the institutional variety, it’s important that we don’t “throw the baby out with the bathwater.” Many scholars believe that the word religion originates from the Latin verb *Ligare*, from which we derive the word *ligament*. *Ligare* means “to connect” or join together. Combined with the prefix *re*, which means “again,” the word religion can be translated as “to connect again.” So if religion means to connect again, what is it that is meant to be reconnected?



Our simple answer: God and human beings. In our view, religion in its simplest purest form is any human activity that is practiced for the purpose of reuniting humans with God. From that perspective, a person who is walking in the woods talking to God is practicing religion. In fact, many people have had more profound experiences communing with God in nature than they have had while participating in a church service on a Sunday morning. We think this is often what people are really trying to communicate when they say – “I’m not into religion; I’m into spirituality.”

Many people are not completely fulfilled by participating in formal religious activities such as worship services, rituals, and theological studies; they would rather have a personal spiritual encounter with God. So if the essence of religious practice is to help God and humans reconnect, how do we go about accomplishing that? We have found that there are specific spiritual techniques that we can use in order to connect to God. We will share some of them here in this book. Also, it has been our experience that there are obstacles

that can contribute to a person’s feeling of alienation from God. We will explore some of them with the goal of finding ways of overcoming these blocks.

The purpose of this book is to provide simple, concrete, practical techniques and ideas that are designed to produce real, direct, and personal experiences with God, our Divine Source. We will also share with you examples of everyday people who have employed these techniques. This is not so much a book of theology as it is a book of what has historically been called mysticism. The Collins English Dictionary defines mysticism as “a system of contemplative prayer and spirituality aimed at achieving direct intuitive experience of the divine.”

### **The Goal is personal experiences with God**

Mysticism is that branch of religion that has the direct experience of God as its goal. Throughout human history, there have been individuals who have had powerful mystical experiences, and in this book, we will introduce you to some of them. In our view, there is nothing more beneficial to a person’s life than

having a direct personal experience with God. That is because the main feature of such an encounter is the discovery that God is a being of unconditional love.

Knowing that we are at our essence the beloved children of a Heavenly Parent is a powerfully transformative realization. When we know that we are loved absolutely, that knowledge has the power to heal us from our suffering, give deep meaning to our lives, and empower us to achieve our highest potential. – Ron and Connie Pappalardo

*Pappalardo, Ron; Pappalardo, Connie (2015-07-23). [Experiences with God: Stories about Mystics: A Guidebook to Your Own Divine Encounter \(Kindle Locations 123-130\)](#). . Kindle Edition.*

### **Insight Manchester Book Club**

On Tuesday, September 15, 2015 at 7:00 PM we will begin to explore this book – all are welcome to participate. For more details please see the events page of this website: [Events info/bookclub](#) or go to [Meetup.com/InsightManchester](#)