

# Modern Mystics

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Sara Miles



Anne Lamott



What is a  
mystic?

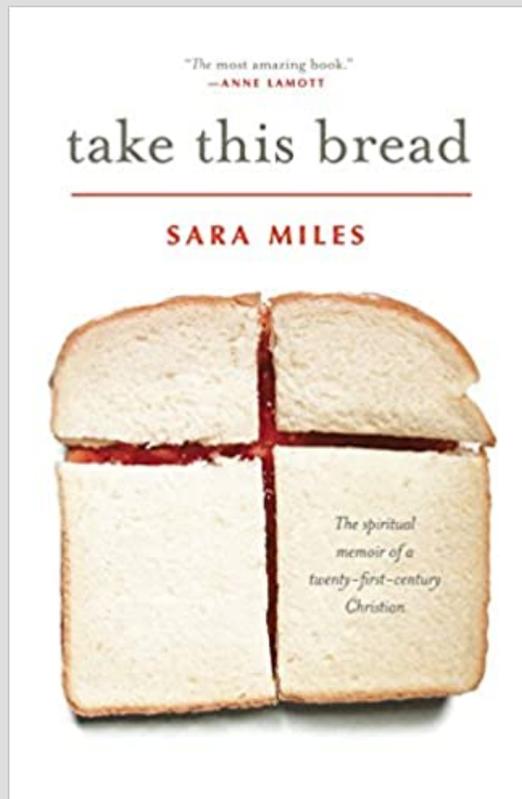
Are these  
women  
mystics?

a person who seeks by contemplation and self-surrender to obtain unity with or absorption into the Deity or the absolute, or who believes in the spiritual apprehension of truths that are beyond the intellect.

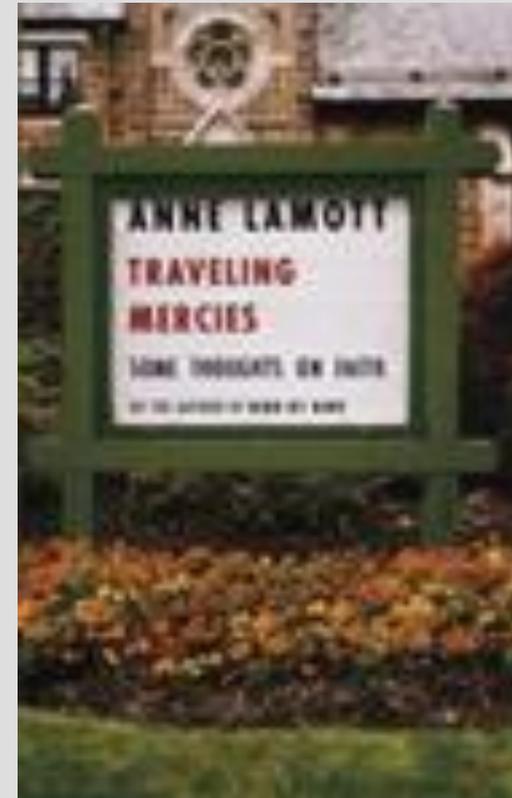
# Authors

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Sara Miles



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# How they came to faith: music

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## Sara Miles

I walked in (to St. Gregory's), took a chair, and tried not to catch anyone's eye . . . Then a man and a woman in long tie-dyed robes stood and began chanting in harmony. There was no organ, no choir, no pulpit: just the unadorned voices of the people, and long silences framed by the ringing of deep Tibetan bowls

# How they came to faith: music

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## Anne Lamott

Then the singing enveloped me. It was furry and resonant, coming from everyone's very heart. There was no sense of performance or judgment, only that the music was breath and food. Something inside me that was stiff and rotting would feel soft and tender. Somehow the singing wore down all the boundaries and distinctions that kept me so isolated. Sitting there, standing with them to sing, sometimes so shaky and sick that I felt like I might tip over, I felt bigger than myself, like I was being taken care of, tricked into coming back to life.

# How they came to faith: Jesus

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Sara Miles

And then we gathered around that table. And there was more singing and standing, and someone was putting a piece of fresh, crusty bread in my hands and saying, “the body of Christ,” and handing me the goblet of wine and saying, “the blood of Christ,” and then something outrageous and terrifying happened. Jesus happened to me.

# How they came to faith: Jesus

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## Anne Lamott

After a while, as I lay there, I became aware of someone with me . . . The feeling was so strong that I actually turned on the light for a moment to make sure no one was there—of course, there wasn't. But after a while, in the dark again, I knew beyond any doubt that it was Jesus. I felt him as surely as I feel my dog lying nearby as I write this. And I was appalled. I thought about my life and my brilliant hilarious progressive friends, I thought about what everyone would think of me if I became a Christian, and it seemed an utterly impossible thing that simply could not be allowed to happen. I turned to the wall and said out loud, "I would rather die."

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How did you come to faith?  
What was your “way in?”

OR

How do you remain in faith?

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# Central to Spirituality: feeding

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Sara Miles

I didn't deserve communion myself now. I wasn't getting it because I was good. I wasn't getting it because I was special. I certainly didn't get to pick who was good enough, holy enough, deserving enough, to receive it. It wasn't a private meal. The bread on that Table had to be shared with everyone in order for me to really share it.

# Central to Spirituality: the nitty-gritty

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## Anne Lamott

Writing a novel is like driving a car at night. You can see only as far as your headlights, but you can make the whole trip that way.' You don't have to see where you're going, you don't have to see your destination or everything you will pass along the way. You just have to see two or three feet ahead of you. This is right up there with the best advice on writing, or life, I have ever heard.

Here are the two best prayers I know: "Help me, help me, help me," and "Thank you, thank you, thank you."

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Both women bring God to the  
everyday.

What is your “central spirituality?”

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# Sara Miles

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It was so tempting to turn the Gospel into law. Wisdom into knowledge. But there was Jesus, the Word made flesh. There he was, over and over sweeping away his followers attempts to codify and regulate their experiences of the divine. He'd spit in men's eyes and stick his fingers in their ears, touch unclean corpses and women, yell at religious authorities, and impatiently demand that people drop their churchgoing and give the poor everything they owned. "Don't be afraid," he said, "It's me. Come on let's go."

# Anne Lamott

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I went around saying for a long time that I am not one of those Christians who is heavily into forgiveness—that I am the other kind. But even though it was funny, and actually true, it started to be too painful to stay this way. They say we are not punished by the sin, and I began to feel punished by unwillingness to forgive. By the time I decided one of the ones who *is* heavily into forgiveness, it was like trying to become a marathon runner in middle age . . .

So we return to the question:  
Are these women mystics?

What do  
you think?

a person who seeks by contemplation and self-surrender to obtain unity with or absorption into the Deity or the absolute, or who believes in the spiritual apprehension of truths that are beyond the intellect.