

What is an Initiate?

"Initiation is the development of the powers and capacities slumbering in every soul."

- Rudolph Steiner -

1. Ini-it-ate: *one who has been instructed in the principles of something.*

2. Ini-it-ate: *one who had been inducted into membership by special ritual.*

3. Ini-it-ate: *one who causes or facilitates the beginning of something.*

As evidenced by the varying definitions given above, it becomes obvious that there's more to being a Spiritual Initiate than what a casual observer might expect. Although these three definitions for the same word seem to be somewhat unrelated, they actually form a cohesive whole that fully describes the nature of an Initiate. In order to more effectively explore what it means to be an Initiate, we must explore each of these definitions individually to see how they interrelate.



1. Ini-it-ate: *one who has been instructed in the principles of something.*

The means by which we become a Spiritual Initiate begins with a process of preparation that requires us to receive instruction in the Principles of Spiritual Truth. In this sense, we must begin the initiation process as a student. However, unlike students in any other discipline, a Spiritual Initiate deals only with Principles of Truth. This is because a Principle is something that does not change over time. Furthermore, Truth is mighty and will always prevail in every situation. In this sense, Principles of Truth are immortal and omnipotent. Consequently, such Principles will never fail to serve us, regardless of who we are, where we are, or when we apply them.

As a student, we acquired what is known as '*shared knowledge*,' which is information

that can be imparted to us by others. However, as an Initiate we must begin to embrace what is known as '*Self-Knowledge*,' which is the Wisdom that can only be found within the essence of our own being. For this process, the teacher is replaced by a Mentor, who is a wise and trusted counselor, as well as a teacher. At this point the new Initiate begins to realize that all the information in the world cannot replace a single drop of understanding. In the words of wise old King Solomon, "*Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get Wisdom; and with all of the getting get Understanding.*" (Prov. 4:7)



2. Ini-it-ate: *one who had been inducted into membership by special ritual.*

A Spiritual Initiate is often considered to be an individual who has undergone some sort of an initiatory ritual or ceremony that has bestowed upon them secret esoteric knowledge or power. Although there might be some credence to this understanding in the context of certain occult organizations or mystery schools, in actuality, any form of initiation ritual is simply a '*ceremony of acknowledgment*.'

Furthermore, any ceremonial powers or privileges bestowed upon the Initiate are actually the result of the preparation and instruction that they have undergone to bring them to a certain level of development. For example, all of the personal knowledge that we bring to a high school graduation ceremony did not come from the ceremony, it came from the four years of arduous studies that preceded the ceremony. In this light we must understand that the process of being an Initiate is an ongoing, and never ending series of initiations that occur with every step we take towards a higher state of consciousness.

Most importantly, a true Initiate has sufficient confidence and humility to continue with their work without the necessity of elaborate ceremonies, and public recognition. Instead, they derive great self-satisfaction from each level of mastery that they attain within themselves. Yet, they will always remain cognizant of the fact that they are on an *'endless journey'* along the sacred Path to Everywhere.



3. Ini-it-ate: *one who causes or facilitates the beginning of something.*

In the simplest possible terms, an Initiate is someone who has the ability to *'cause something to begin.'* In the case of a Spiritual Initiate, it is the capacity to initiate changes within their own inherent nature. Unfortunately, most human beings undergo very little personal change in the course of their lifetime, and those changes that do occur tend to be the result of simply adapting to seemingly uncontrollable outer conditions in their lives. This is a process of slow motion growth called *evolution.*

On the other hand, a Spiritual Initiate has the ability and volition to initiate strategies of self-improvement without the necessity of being prodded by outside forces. Then, in some mysterious way, by improving themselves they cause the outer conditions of their lives to automatically improve of their own accord. It is through the power of initiation that rapid personal growth can be achieved by the Spiritual Initiate.

The Mystery

Although the definitions for an Initiate, as given above might seem to define a somewhat straightforward path of development, there is also a mystery to it all that cannot be logically explained. It is the *'Mystery of Mystical Mastery.'*

Upon entering this *'path of mystical ascent'* it is not uncommon for an Initiate to experience a wide variety of sometimes bizarre and unusual psycho-physical phenomena. The extent and frequency of such experiences has much to do with the evolutionary state of our soul at the time of our incarnation. For some highly evolved souls, very little phenomenon will occur. Yet, for others the extent of occurrences can be quite significant. This is why it is important to have an authentic teacher as a Mentor to guide us through this process. Following is a brief and partial list of some of the phenomena that might occur.

- *Unusual Coincidences*
- *Mystical Visions*
- *Prophetic Intuitions*
- *Intense Emotional Turmoil*
- *States of Rapture and Ecstasy*
- *Unusual Physical Maladies*
- *Miraculous Healings*
- *Unexpected Opportunities*

The Dark Night of the Soul

Perhaps one of the most challenging experiences that must be faced by an Initiate is a psychological phenomenon known as the *'Dark Night of the Soul.'* This is a term derived from a poem and commentary written by the 16th century mystic St. John of the Cross. It describes the arduous journey that we must take to ultimately come into mystical communion with God. It is essentially a process of multiple stages, whereby we must intentionally engage in the purification of our very own soul.

The great challenge of the Dark Night of the Soul is that it requires us to come face-to-face with the many flaws and ungodly tendencies that lie hidden within our own subconscious nature. This purgatory process

can become extremely disheartening, and discourage many from pursuing the path of Spiritual Initiation. In the ancient wisdom it is said that, *"We never realize how crooked our path has been until we begin to walk the straight path of Truth."* In a more practical sense, we could say that it is a little bit like washing windows. We never realize just how dirty our windows are until we start to clean them.

Finding the Christ

Perhaps the most rewarding and significant experience that can occur on the path of Initiation is finding the *'Christ in us, the hope of glory.'* (Col. 1:27) This experience has sometimes been called the *'Mystery of Golgotha.'* This is because Golgotha means *'the place of the skull,'* and this experience is primarily mental in nature. In essence, this is an experience whereby we duplicate the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ within our own mental and emotional natures.

In other words, we are *'suffering on the cross'* whenever we are experiencing an inner conflict, and then we are *resurrected* by some greater Truth that seemingly resolves the conflict. Furthermore, in our resurrected state we always become something greater than what we could have imagined based upon our past experience of life. We always become wiser and more loving than we have ever been before.

This is an experience that every human being has unconsciously had many times over in the course of their lives. However, as an Initiate we engage this process consciously, so that we can quickly resolve the many tribulations that occur in our lives. From a philosophical standpoint, this is essentially Hegel's *'Dialectic Process.'*

In Conclusion

Ultimately there is no way to describe exactly what might occur on the path of Initiation. This is because an Initiate is a student of Truth, and *'Truth is a pathless land.'* Consequently, the path of every Initiate will always be unique unto themselves since it is a path to anywhere, and everywhere that the Initiate is destined to go. Furthermore, this is a journey that requires great courage since we have no way of knowing what lies ahead. Therefore, we must let go of goals and objectives for our lives. Instead, we must chart our course with pure intentions only.

Ultimately, the path of Initiation is a form of accelerated evolution that moves us beyond the slow motion growth of humanity. In this sense, we could say that living as an Initiate turns us from a secure *homesteader* into a courageous *pioneer*, going forth to explore the wilderness of human destiny in order to blaze a trail of blessings for others to follow.

"It never did anybody any good to be a step ahead of the rest. But it's the only way to go."

Rev. Lloyd Strom

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