

# Sacred Pathways

Do you find yourself envious of the way that some other people connect with God? This resource helps you understand all the different ways that people can connect to God, and shows you the value of each and every path. Instead of trying to imitate another person's walk with God, you should focus on bettering your own "sacred pathway."

This resource is based on the book, *Sacred Pathways*, written by Gary Thomas. Broken into two parts, the first section of this resource describes each of the nine Sacred Pathways. The second section is the assessment that you can take to find out which pathways you most easily connect with God.

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# NATURALISTS

## LOVING GOD OUT OF DOORS

### WHO ARE WE?

We find God in His “cathedral” - the out-of-doors.

God’s first dwelling with us was in a garden. Genesis 2

God will speak to us through creation.

Consider our spiritual lessons learned in observing the metamorphosis a caterpillar encounters in becoming a butterfly.

“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the works of his hands.” Psalm 19:1

“For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities are clearly seen, being understood from what has been made.” Romans 1:20

More than God’s beauty is revealed outside. His awful and fearful terror is revealed as well, i.e. rain can nourish the ground and can flood a region.

Creation teaches us of God’s beauty and also of His power and judgment.

David says that God’s green pastures and quiet waters restore his soul. Psalm 23:2-3

Jesus sought lonely places to pray and be replenished. He taught his disciples to do the same.

### WHAT ARE OUR PITFALLS?

**INDIVIDUALISM:** Jesus spent time outdoors to prepare to go back into the world. We must make sure we are not using creation to escape the duties of following Jesus.

**SPIRITUAL DELUSION:** Anything “received” on a walk with God should not be considered authoritative, but merely advice that must be tested. The Bible is our only sure guide. Satan can provide counterfeit experiences that can lead us astray.

**IDOLIZING NATURE:** Be wary of the heresy of pantheism – the worship of nature. It is not true that God is in all of nature, or that nature is God. The Bible teaches, “the earth is the Lord’s.” Pantheism twists it to “The earth is the Lord.” Pantheism is a New Age philosophy. Nevertheless, do not allow the lie of pantheism rob you of worshiping God through an appreciation of what he has made.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR THE ROAD:

- Fully commit your life to Christ. The more you appreciate the Creator, the more you will appreciate His creation.
- Consider the greatness of creation – mountains, sky, and oceans all portray the immense power, wisdom and goodness of God.
- Consider the variety of creation – plant and animal life have more variety than we could ever examine in a lifetime. God is capable of doing a multitude of things at once.
- Consider the beauty of creation – beauty in God’s world comes a many shapes, colors, shades. God’s beauty cannot be revealed through one form.
- Consider the abundance of creation - count stars in sky, sand on shore, trees in forest. We serve a God of plenty whose love and mercy are inexhaustible.
- View God’s world as His cathedral where He wants to meet with you and others.

# SENSATES

## LOVING GOD WITH THE SENSES

### WHO ARE WE?

- Some Christians are moved by sensuous worship more than anything else.
- By sensuous we're referring to the five senses of taste, touch, smell, sound, and sight.
- When we reduce worship to intellectual assent, we are forced to worship God in crippled existence.
- Ezekiel feels a wind, sees flashing lightning, hears the sound of wings, and is asked to eat a scroll that tastes sweet. After all this he sits down, stunned for 7 days. Ezekiel 1, 3
- John is overwhelmed by loud trumpet voices, blazing eyes, and sounds of rushing waters as he writes to the 7 churches of Revelation.
- Sometimes experiencing God comes with overwhelming stimulation.
- This is a flashing glimpse of heaven.
- Christianity without beauty becomes a disembodied religion of the mind.
- Using our bodies to glorify God is a much better response than denying the role of the body in worship, and then turning around and using the body in areas that lead to sin.

### WHAT ARE OUR PITFALLS?

**WORSHIPING WITHOUT CONVICTION OR CONTENT:** Words by be sung with no more emotion than placing an order for a Big Mac. Also, while we're singing, the words we say don't really matter. God knows it's just a song, we think. Music can make us feign a commitment that just isn't there, causing us to become callous, insincere believers.

**IDOLIZING BEAUTY:** Someone could leave a very beautiful liturgical service satisfied by the sensuous experience without having entered the true presence of God.

**WORSHIPING WORSHIP:** Sensory stimulation is not the same thing as a true commitment of the will. Be cautious of using your senses to worship worship.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR THE ROAD:

**SOUND:** "Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, praise his name" Psalm 96. Use musical instruments – Psalms 147, 149, 150. Read the Scriptures out loud. We often have our hearts and thoughts challenged when we hear the Word of God.

**SMELL:** No incense offering will wipe out a single sin. However, incense isn't used to find favor with God, but to help us pray. It is a means, not an end.

**TOUCH:** Holding a paper clip while you pray could help you focus on a marriage that is falling apart; a rubber band could help you pray for a pliable heart. Carry a nail in your pocket on Good Friday to reaffirm your commitment.

**SIGHT:** Check out the religious art of Rembrandt and others. We may find that looking at someone or a picture of someone while we pray for them increases our ability to pray.

**TASTE:** Taste some salt as you pray for your influence in a non-Christian environment. Jesus says He is the bread of life; remind yourself of this when you taste it.

# TRADITIONALISTS

## LOVING GOD THROUGH RITUAL AND SYMBOL

### WHO ARE WE?

- Many rightly fear a form of faith that has no substance so they stress, "Christianity is a relationship, not a religion."
- We must remember that God invented and sometimes commanded religious practices.
- Religious practices are the way people embody spiritual truths.
- Abraham and Moses expressed their faith by building altars.
- God understands that our reaction to symbols often reveals our hearts' reaction to him. If we're flippant toward symbols, we're often flippant toward what the symbol represents.
- Peter and John observed regular, set times of prayer.
- Paul willingly underwent the ritual of purification.
- The NT figures made it clear that no one will be saved through religion alone; but they also made it clear, by their example, that Christians can be nourished by certain religious practices.

### WHAT ARE OUR PITFALLS?

**SERVING GOD WITHOUT KNOWING GOD:** Religion can serve faith, but it doesn't substitute for faith, and it can never replace faith.

**NEGLECTING SOCIAL OBLIGATIONS:** It is not enough for us to cultivate holiness; we must reach out and minister to others. Amos 5:21-24. Jesus says that religion without substance is hypocrisy.

**JUDGING OTHERS:** Religious practice can powerfully enhance a person's faith, but it can also destroy corporate faith if it is used to criticize, measure, or divide. Colossians 2:16-17.

**REPEATING MECHANICALLY:** Without attention ritual becomes an empty exercise that fills us with insincerity.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR THE ROAD:

#### RITUAL:

- Find a special way to celebrate the religious holidays, i.e. Good Friday, Easter, Christmas, Pentecost. Place a reminder in your calendar.
- Read Scripture aloud.
- People in church history read Psalms 50, 62, 90, 103, & 140 daily or regularly.
- Read something from Pascal on November 23<sup>rd</sup> the day he had a life-changing experience with God. Read Bonhoeffer on April 9<sup>th</sup> – the day of his martyrdom. Look up Augustine's birthday and read him that day.
- Develop your own call to worship and repeat it frequently every month. Write and repeat your own prayers.
- Create an intercessory prayer list.

#### SYMBOL:

- Symbols help us to preserve a "moral memory" to help us live rightly. Some who have failed sexually can begin wearing a cross to remind them to stay pure. Others could wear a ring during certain periods of prayer to remind them to pray.
- Symbols from Christian art that you could place in your home include: anchor [hope]; arrow [martyrdom/pain]; banner [triumph]; circle [eternity]; crown [sovereignty]; lamp [wisdom]; square [earthly existence].

#### SACRIFICE:

- Fasting during Lent.
- Give up something permanently or dedicate something to the Lord's use.
- Give your money sacrificially.

# ASCETICS

## LOVING GOD IN SOLITUDE AND SIMPLICITY

### WHO ARE WE?

- The ascetic temperament gravitates toward solitude, austerity, simplicity, and deep commitment. It represents believers who are not afraid of discipline, severity, and solitude. It is similar to the monastic lifestyle.
  - Austere can mean morally strict, somber, grave, unadorned or simple.
- Most of our solitude is forced, not chosen, creating loneliness rather than spiritual intimacy with the Father.
- Ascetics, perhaps more than any of the other temperaments, must practice loving God.
- A Nazirite vow was taken by people for a period of time during which they abstained from alcohol, refrained from cutting their hair, and had no contact with a dead body. During a Nazirite vow these people were “set apart” for a special purpose. The vow was for a set period of time, then they could leave their solitude to fulfill the social obligations of their faith.
- John the Baptist lived a solitary and ascetic life.
- Jesus fasted for 40 days in solitude, and had moments of solitude during ministry. Mark 1:35; Matthew 26:36
- Jesus taught prayer should be done in secret.
- Anyone who has been stretched in ministry knows that Jesus’ real battle over facing the cross was fought in Gethsemane. He finally won by choosing to be obedient.
- The devout are called to mourn, see: Lamentations, Daniel & Joel.
- Naturalists might go to a beautiful countryside; an Ascetic may seek a barren wasteland.
- While sensate Christians are often drawn to God through their senses, ascetic Christians are often distracted by their senses so they will try to shut them out.
- Christian asceticism doesn’t seek suffering or self-denial as an end, but as a means, as a way to love “something else that God might be loved more.”
- Ascetics stress deeds before words.
- True ascetics are strict with themselves but treat others with supernatural gentleness.

### WHAT ARE OUR PITFALLS?

**OVEREMPHASIZING PERSONAL PIETY:** Instead of outward displays of piety, God calls people to administer true justice by showing mercy and compassion. “Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor” Zechariah 7:1-10. Our need for spiritual refreshment must be balanced with our obligation to reach out to others.

**SEEKING PAIN FOR ITS OWN SAKE:** Masochism is a sickness, not a spiritual path. Asceticism is a means to an end, never an end in itself.

**SEEKING TO GAIN GOD’S FAVOR:** It is futile to try to win God’s approval or forgiveness by developing an extraordinary holiness. There is nothing we can do that can make God love us any more. His love is absolute and His forgiveness is based on a prior work completed by Jesus, not our current spiritual practices.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR THE ROAD:

#### SOLITUDE:

- Perhaps create a prayer room in your home.
- See if your church will give you keys to the sanctuary to get away and pray.
- Learn to live in detachment within society.
- Arrive early to work or class to be alone.

**AUSTERITY:** Be very simple. Susanna Wesley frequently pulled her apron over her head and prayed. Her kids learned not to bother her during that time.

#### STRICTNESS:

- Ascetics are strict only because they want to reserve their time and energy to passionately pursue God.
- Fast. Deny yourself some pleasure, entertainment, or comfort, and then focus on purity of mind and heart. You can fast from food entirely, just eat one light meal per day, or fast certain types of food.
- Some Christians have found the middle of the night to be one of their best times of prayer & worship.
- Rise earlier than normal one day per week.
- More important than losing sleep is being vigilant when others commonly are not.
- Try to be silent for a few hours at a time.
- Take a personal retreat for several hours, an afternoon, a day, weekend or a week at a time.
- Endure hardship rather than fight it; don’t choose to be pampered. Don’t demand to be warm when it is cold.
- When sickness, heat, cold, hunger, or tiredness come, you can either adopt a demanding spirit and stunt your spiritual growth, or embrace them, learn from them, and mature in you faith. Your attitude will make all the difference.

# ACTIVISTS

## LOVING GOD THROUGH CONFRONTATION

### WHO ARE WE?

- Activists are spiritually nourished through the battle. John 4:34.
- “There is only one kind of person who can fight the Lord’s battles in anywhere near a proper way, and that is the person who by nature is unbelligerent. A belligerent person tends to do it because they are belligerent; at least it looks that way. The world must observe that, when we must differ with each other as true Christians, we do it not because we love the smell of blood, the smell of the arena, the smell of the bullfight, but because we must for God’s sake.” F. Schaeffer
- The fear involved in confrontation creates a certain dependence on God that isn’t normally there. Facing this fear, stepping out in faith, and finding God faithful as He meets you, can bring deeper intimacy with God.
- See: the life of Moses (Exodus, to start), Proverbs 24:11-12, Psalms 7, 68 & 140; Ezekiel 33:1-20
- Activism can lead to emotional depletion; finding ways to be filled and renewed spiritually is necessary.

### WHAT ARE OUR PITFALLS?

**BECOMING JUDGMENTAL:** Where activists often go wrong is assuming that the holier they become, the less able they’ll be to tolerate sinners. Maturity is evidenced by eagerness to see sin leave our lives, coupled with compassion toward other sinners. A self-righteous, critical attitude is not a reflection of the compassion of Christ.

#### AMBITION AND SEX:

- There seems to be a direct spiritual relationship between the level of a person’s ambition and sexual temptation, especially in men.
- Ambition is often a fight against powerlessness and a fight for control.
- The ambitious person is also inherently selfish.
- The very qualities that help you succeed as an activist may tempt you to fail as a Christian.
- Ambition coupled with secrecy is a fertile ground for sexual sin; throw in fatigue, and you are almost certain to embarrass yourself and the ministry God has given you. The activist needs honest accountability.

**ELITISM AND RESENTMENT:** An activist may enjoy confrontation and not understand why others may fear it. They also have little appreciation for other spiritual gifts or callings. They can condemn others for their lack of activism.

#### PREOCCUPATION WITH ACTIVITY AND STATISTICS:

- For an activist, we must leave the results to God or we’ll be consumed and driven by success rather than by the Holy Spirit. Beware; some activists just cannot accept defeat.
- When God first gave Moses his commission, Moses said, “Who am I, that I should...bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” God’s response was an implicit rebuke against such self-sufficiency. God said simply, “I will be with you.” In other words, it doesn’t matter who you are, Moses; what matters is who is sending you.
- Habakkuk is a good warning to activists. God seems to be accused more that he is petitioned, as if Habby was more concerned about Justice than God Himself.
- You must stand on a stool with three legs: sincerity, effort, and thoughtful prayer.

**LACK OF EMPHASIS ON PERSONAL SANCTITY:** Make sure you examine yourself before God. Matthew 7:2-4.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR THE ROAD:

**WRITING:** Many writers have changed the destinies of millions through the written word, i.e. Harriet Beecher Stowe.

#### SOCIAL REFORM:

- John Wesley said there is “no holiness but social holiness...and to turn Christianity into a solitary religion is to destroy it.”
- Charles Finney refused to baptize Christians who still believed in slavery.
- The Bible calls for us to reach out to less fortunate – James 1:27; Matthew 25:35-36.
- While others may disagree, we first must be fully informed; then prayerfully decisive; third, fully involved.
- Activists must also actively confront error and evil. Sometimes truth equals confrontation.

**PRAYER AND ACTIVISTS:** Of all the pathways, prayer is crucial to the activist. Cultivate an active prayer life!

- Prayer Walks: Intercede for a dorm floor or classroom building by walking around it in silent prayer.
- Spread a map in front of you and pray for unreached people groups.
- Pray with your Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other.

**PROCESSIONS:** Here large numbers of Christians gather to march in celebration of Jesus. This was very popular during the Baroque period 1550-1750.

# CAREGIVERS

## LOVING GOD BY LOVING OTHERS

### WHO ARE WE?

- Caring for others is a prophetic activity. Self-centered creatures that we are, being concerned about others is an unnatural response and provides evidence of a supernatural touch by God.
- The parable of the Good Samaritan reminds us that attending to 'spiritual concerns' is no excuse for refusing to get our hands dirty.
- "If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?" 1 John 3:17
- "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." Philippians 2:4
- "God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you helped his people and continue to help them." Hebrews 6:10
- "Pure and faultless" religion is looking after orphans and widows in their distress. James 1:27
- The writers of the NT leave us without any doubt as to the importance of loving God by loving those he made.

### WHAT ARE OUR PITFALLS?

#### JUDGING:

- Remember the lesson of Martha & Mary. Caregiving is not a license to judge others who serve God in different ways. True, all Christians are called to care for others, but there are different ways this obligation can be fulfilled, and it is not for us to judge the validity of someone else's worship.

#### SERVING OURSELVES THROUGH SERVING OTHERS:

- Some people with esteem problems feel a need to serve others for self-validation. When caregiving becomes an act of taking, an act of deception, it is done so others will love or need them in return.

#### NEGLECTING THOSE CLOSEST TO US:

- In our zeal to love others, we must remember that God makes home the priority. See 1 Timothy 5:8 Don't neglect your family while you save the world.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR THE ROAD:

The caregiver temperament incorporates many different avenues of loving God through serving others:

- Nursing sick people
- Visiting the elderly
- Volunteer rescue unit
- Repairing a house
- "adopting" a prisoner
- Helping a friend through a personal crisis
- Lending money
- Help someone battle substance abuse
- Helping an illiterate person learn to read
- Donating time at a battered women's shelter
- Counseling at a pregnancy care center
- Working in a soup kitchen
- Fixing somebody's car
- Repairing a house
- Making recordings for the blind
- Researching a cure for a disease
- Helping somebody reconfigure their computer
- Watching the children of some tired parents
- Giving free cookies out on campus
- Raking leaves of elderly
- Providing free firewood for needy
- Shovel snow
- Remove trash from dorm rooms on your floor

# ENTHUSIASTS

## LOVING GOD WITH MYSTERY AND CELEBRATION

### WHO ARE WE?

- Enthusiasts enjoy celebratory worship as well as many of the more supernatural forms of faith.
- People with this spiritual temperament like to let go and experience God on the precipice of excitement and awe.
- We worship and serve a supernatural God who manifests himself to us in supernatural ways.
- In a cynical and depressed world, enthusiasts point toward faith, mystery, and expectancy. When the situation seems impossible, enthusiasts say, "Now God's really going to move!"
- It is a sinful tendency to lapse into a practical "atheism," believing in God, but not expecting him to move in supernatural ways.
- Sometimes we may be using a gift God has given us and say something that sounds profound and then think, "Where in the world did that come from?"
- Sometimes a prayer is answered in a way that makes coincidence seem impossible.
- Celebration has a wide background in Scripture.
- A person's reluctance to celebrate enthusiastically is more a personal foible than a sign of maturity.
- Remember, celebratory worship must still include reverence.
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### WHAT ARE OUR PITFALLS?

#### SEEKING EXPERIENCES FOR EXPERIENCES' SAKE:

- Beware – many spiritual manifestations are expressly forbidden for a Christian, see Duet. 18:10-12.
- Be careful to remain true to seeking God rather than searching for new experiences.
- To demand that God answer all our prayers with a "yes" is to ask for his omnipotence [power] without having the benefit of his omniscience [knowledge].

#### BEING INDEPENDENT:

- Enthusiasts need to be rooted in a strong church to help them interpret their encounters with God.

#### EQUATING "GOOD FEELINGS" WITH "GOOD WORSHIP":

- Feelings come and go. Enthusiasts shouldn't apologize for enjoying them, but they should avoid becoming dependent upon them.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR THE ROAD:

- For some who have lost their ability to celebrate, spending time with children might be a good way to recapture the joy and wonder of your faith.
- You should never accept a dream that clashes with the revelation of Scripture. Also, never make a major decision based solely on a dream. However, you may find that God can bring insight into a situation, or give you a warning, when you are open to receiving something in a dream.
- Expect God to give you specific answers to specific prayers.
- Believe God to heal or respond in a supernatural way in real situations in your life.
- Step out in faith. Whether it's building a business, writing a poem, planting a garden, painting a picture, creating something can be a profoundly holy experience.



# CONTEMPLATIVES

## LOVING GOD THROUGH ADORATION

### WHO ARE WE?

- The contemplative seeks to perform the first work of adoring God. God is known and described as the heavenly spouse in whom all the contemplative's delight is met.
- While some seek to serve the Lord, others seek to celebrate him, and still others seek to explain him, the contemplative seeks to gaze lovingly into God's face and be caught up in the rapture of a lover's experience.
- They want to enjoy God and learn to love him in ever deeper ways.
- A contemplative reminds us that God seeks a passionate love that is so strong it burns all other bonds. See Duet. 7:7-8 & Psalm 63
- They can be misunderstood. Martha, a caregiver, was rebuked not for performing service, but for judging Mary, a contemplative.
- "The fact remains that contemplation will not be given to those who willfully remain at a distance from God, who confine their interior life to a few routine exercises of piety and a few external acts of worship and service performed as a matter of duty... God does not manifest Himself to these souls because they do not seek Him with any real desire." – Thomas Merton
- "There are so many Christians who have practically no idea of the immense love of God for them, and of the power of that Love to do them good, to bring them happiness." – Merton
- But contemplatives live for this love.
- Contemplatives remind us of a startling fact: There is one thing that each individual Christian can do that nobody else can: give our personal love and affection to God.

### WHAT ARE OUR PITFALLS?

**LOSING BALANCE:** Beware that your love for God is precluding enjoying the company of others or something God has made.

**CREATING A VACUUM:** Be cautious of practices that speak of emptying yourself and creating a vacuum. A Christian wants to be filled with the Holy Spirit, not emptied out.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR THE ROAD:

#### THE JESUS PRAYER:

- Through history, contemplatives made great use of the "Jesus Prayer," that goes like this: "Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."
- The purpose of the Jesus Prayer is to practice the presence of God.
- When you are anxious, frightened, uptight, spiritually dry, or being tempted, the Jesus prayer calls you to a humble reliance on God.

#### SECRET ACTS OF DEVOTION:

- A secret act of devotion is something you do – giving an anonymous gift, helping out someone "behind the scenes," sending a card – without letting anyone, even the person who benefits, know you had anything to do with it.
- The importance of secrecy is that it ensures that you are doing it for the love of God – only.
- Examples include:
  - Anonymous gift of cash to someone in need
  - Poem written to God, then burned
  - Song sung only in the presence of God
  - Intensive, intercessory prayer with fasting
  - A symbol of your love for God, which you carry in your pocket or wear as a necklace or ring

#### CENTERING PRAYER:

- Choose a word [i.e. Jesus or Father, etc.] as a focus for contemplative prayer. Repeat the word silently in your mind for a set amount of time [say, 15 minutes]. Fill you mind with thoughts of Jesus, or love, joy, or peace.
- The goal is not to create a spiritual experience, but to simply rest in and enjoy the presence of God.

#### STATIONS OF THE CROSS:

- Simply read through the events of Christ's crucifixion, i.e. death sentence given to Jesus, Gethsemane, women mourning for Jesus, being stripped, beaten, mocked, nailed, Jesus speaking to John about Mary, dying, removed from cross, laid in tomb.
- At each point pause and picture the truth of Scripture this episode highlights.

# INTELLECTUALS

## LOVING GOD WITH THE MIND

### WHO ARE WE?

- When intellectual's minds are awakened, when they understand something new about God or his ways with his children, then their adoration is unleashed.
- If they are not learning new things about God their relationship with Him feels stagnant.
- Intellectual pursuit has played a key role in advancing God's work.
- The early church was so successful in its witness to the pagan world not only because they outlived and out-died the world, but they out-thought it.
- See: Psalm 49:1-4; Proverbs 1:5-7
- Right thinking – conforming our thoughts to the thoughts of God – enables right living.
- A vast majority of the difficulties Christians experience in life is caused because we don't understand the Scriptures well enough.

### WHAT ARE OUR PITFALLS?

#### LOVING CONTROVERSY:

- See: 1 Timothy 1:4, 6:4-5; 2 Timothy 2:23-25
- Discussions aimed at defeating rather than caring for the welfare of the other person is not godly.

#### KNOWING RATHER THAN DOING:

- Knowing what is right is not a substitute for doing what is right.
- According to the book of Proverbs, the truly wise person is someone who actively applies the ways of righteousness which they have studied.

#### BEING PROUD:

- Pride is a common failing among intellectuals. It is demonstrated by the common desire to correct virtually everyone.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR THE ROAD:

- Consider getting a MA from a seminary after undergrad studies.
- Many seminaries offer one-week courses during the summer – this could set your study agenda for the entire year following.
- Think how much stronger you'd be as a Christian if you picked one topic a year for in-depth study.
- Many courses are available through audio or video formats.
- What are the five basic building blocks for a Christian mind? - church history, biblical studies, systematic theology, ethics, and apologetics.

## YOUR PATHWAY ASSESSMENT

- Score these statements on a scale, one to five, with five being very true and one being not true at all. Record your answer in the box provided.

*Hint: try to avoid scoring a statement with a 3 – push yourself to either a 4 or a 2 instead.*

1	I feel closest to God when I see him in the needy, the poor, the sick, and the imprisoned. I feel God's presence most strongly when I am sitting quietly beside the bed of someone who is lonely or ill or taking a meal to someone in need. You can count on me to offer a ride or volunteer for helping activities.
2	I feel closest to God when I'm participating in a familiar form of worship that has memories dating back to my childhood. Rituals and traditions move me more than anything else.
3	I get frustrated when the church focuses too much on feelings and spiritual experience. Of far more importance is the need to understand the Christian faith and have proper doctrine.
4	I feel cut off if I have to spend too much time indoors, just listening to speakers or singing songs. Nothing makes me feel closer to God than being outside.
5	I feel closest to God when I am alone and there is nothing to distract me from focusing on his presence.
6	I get very frustrated if I see apathetic Christians who don't become active. I want to drop everything else I'm doing and help the church overcome its apathy.
7	God is an exciting God, and we should be excited about worshiping him. I don't understand how some Christians can say they love God, and then act like they're going to a funeral whenever they walk into church.
8	I feel closest to God when my emotions are awakened, when God quietly touches my heart, tells me that he loves me, and makes me feel like I'm his closest friend. I would rather be alone with God, contemplating his love, than participating in a formal liturgy or being distracted by a walk outside.
9	I enjoy attending a "high church" service with incense and formal Communion or Eucharist.
10	I feel closest to God when I learn something new about him that I didn't understand before. My mind needs to be stimulated. It's very important to me that I know exactly what I believe.
11	The most difficult times in my faith are when I can't feel God's presence within me.
12	I feel closest to God when my heart is sent soaring and I feel like I want to burst, worship God all day long, and shout out his Name. Celebrating God and his love is my favorite form of worship.
13	I grow weary of Christians who spend their time singing songs while a sick neighbor goes without a hot meal or a family in need doesn't get help fixing their car.
14	I feel closest to God when I'm cooperating with him in standing up for his justice: writing letters to government officials and newspaper editors, picketing at an abortion clinic, urging people to vote, or becoming familiar with current issues.
15	I would describe my faith as more "internal" than "external."

16	Individualism within the church is a real danger. Christianity is a corporate faith, and most of our worship should have a corporate expression.
17	I feel closest to God when I'm in a church that allows my senses to come alive – when I can see, smell, hear, and almost taste his majesty.
18	I feel closest to God when I'm surrounded by what he has made – the mountains, the forests, or the sea.
19	The words <i>tradition</i> and <i>history</i> are very appealing to me.
20	The words <i>courageous confrontation</i> and <i>social activism</i> are very appealing to me.
21	The words <i>concepts</i> and <i>truth</i> are very appealing to me.
22	The words <i>sensuous</i> , <i>colorful</i> , and <i>aromatic</i> are very appealing to me.
23	The words <i>silence</i> , <i>solitude</i> , and <i>discipline</i> are very appealing to me.
24	The words <i>service</i> and <i>compassion</i> are very appealing to me.
25	The words <i>celebration</i> and <i>joy</i> are very appealing to me.
26	The words <i>love</i> , <i>intimacy</i> , and <i>heart</i> are very appealing to me.
27	Taking an overnight retreat by myself at a monastery where I could spend large amounts of time alone in a small room, praying to God and studying his Word, and fasting for one or more days are all activities I would enjoy.
28	I sense God's power when I am counseling a friend who has lost a job, preparing meals for or fixing the car of a family in need, or spending a week at an orphanage in Mexico.
29	I would enjoy attending a workshop on learning to worship through dance or attending several worship sessions with contemporary music. I expect that God is going to move in some unexpected ways.
30	I feel close to God when I participate in several hours of uninterrupted study time – reading God's Word or good Christian books and then perhaps having an opportunity to teach [or participate in a discussion with] a small group.
31	I would prefer to worship God by spending an hour beside a small brook than by participating in a group service.
32	I'd have a difficult time worshiping in a church building that is plain and lacks a sense of awe or majesty. Beauty is very important to me, and I have a difficult time worshiping through second-rate Christian art or music.
33	Activities like confronting a social evil, attending a meeting to challenge the new curriculum before the local school board, and volunteering on a political campaign are important to me.
34	I really enjoy having thirty minutes of uninterrupted time a day to sit in quiet prayer and "hold hands" with God, writing love letters to him and enjoying his presence.
35	Participating in a formal liturgy or prayer-book service, developing symbols that I could place in my car, home, or office, and developing a Christian calendar for our family to follow are activities that I would enjoy.

36	If I could escape to a garden to pray on a cold day, walk through a meadow on a warm day, and take a trip by myself to the mountains on another day, I would be very happy.
37	I would enjoy reading the book <i>A Place Apart: Monastic Prayer and Practice for Everyone</i> .
38	A book entitled <i>99 Ways to Help Your Neighbor</i> would be very appealing to me.
39	A book called <i>The Beauty of Worship</i> would be appealing to me.
40	A book on church dogmatics and doctrines would be appealing to me.
41	I would enjoy reading the book <i>The Mystery and Excitement of Walking with God</i> .
42	A book called <i>Nature's Sanctuaries: A Picturebook</i> would be appealing to me.
43	A book titled <i>Symbolism and Liturgy in Personal Worship</i> would be appealing to me.
44	The book written by Frank Schaeffer, <i>A Time for Anger</i> , would be an important book for me to read.
45	I would enjoy reading <i>The Transforming Friendship</i> .
46	I spend more money on books than music tapes.
47	I would really enjoy spending time on a night watch, taking a short vow of silence, simplifying my life.
48	I would rather nurse someone to health or help someone repair their house than teach an adult Sunday school class, go on a prayer and fasting retreat, or take a lonely walk in the woods.
49	Seeing God's beauty in nature is more moving to me than understanding new concepts, participating in a formal religious service, or participating in social causes.
50	I spend more money on music and worship tapes than on Christian books.
51	When I think of God, I think of love, friendship, and adoration more than anything else.
52	I would really enjoy using drawing exercises or art to improve my prayer life.
53	I would like to awaken the church from its apathy.
54	I would really enjoy developing a personal rule [or ritual] of prayer.

# YOUR PATHWAY ASSESSMENT RESPONSE SHEET

Record your responses in the boxes and total each column. Then list your pathways from the highest score to the least score.

4	9	2	5	6	1	7	8	3
18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10
31	22	19	23	20	24	25	26	21
36	32	35	27	33	28	29	34	30
42	39	43	37	44	38	41	45	40
49	52	54	47	53	48	50	51	46
Naturalist	Sensate	Traditionalist	Ascetic	Activist	Caregiver	Enthusiast	Contemplative	Intellectual

Rank	Score	Pathway
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		

Any score of fifteen or higher indicates a preference or tendency for that pathway.

Reflect on the cluster of pathways that you prefer. What do they say about you? Can you begin to write a "spiritual prescription" based on some of the "Suggestions" in the descriptions section?

For example you might write, "At least once a week, I'll spend some time going on a prayer-walk through the woods." Or, "On a regular basis, I'll need to make sure I'm continuing to study. Perhaps I'll need to invest in some systematic theology books or podcasts from reliable Christian thinkers."