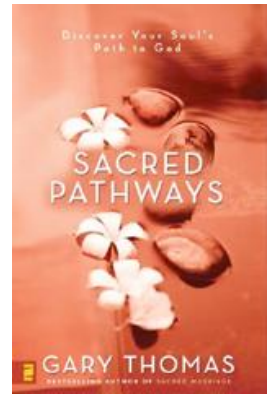


Sunday, May 19, 2013 – Sacred Pathways

When it comes to the personal dimensions of expressing worship, we are all created differently—this is God's design. There is freedom in realizing that we can relate to God in the way we were made and not feel guilty about following the patterns of others. Identifying our natural bent also helps us to discover the pathways that we tend to avoid and where we need to stretch ourselves. The following list is from Gary Thomas' book "**Sacred Pathways**" and explores some of the ways way we most naturally sense God and experience His presence in personal worship environments.



Naturalist - Psalm 19:1-4

Description: *Nature is life-giving and God-breathed. When there, your soul is deeply restored.*

Suggested Activity: *Take your Bible outside and read it. Go for a walk while you pray.*

To Explore: *How do you balance the need for natural beauty and quiet with the command to be in community? What kinds of community activities are satisfying to you spiritually and emotionally?*

Caution: *Don't use nature as an escape, the church is the gathered people of God*

Acts of Compassion – Matthew 25:35-36; James 1:27

Description: *This temperament loves God by loving others.*

Suggested Activity: *Volunteer somewhere that emphasizes active service (Gateway of Hope).*

To Explore: *Do you ever minister to someone out of your own need? (can't say 'no' without guilt)*

Caution: *Identify your true motive for action and service and ensure that they are pure.*

Sensate – Ezra 1; Psalm 45:1; Luke 7:36-38

Description: *The five senses are God's most effective inroad into this person's heart.*

Suggested Activity: *Vary your prayer posture (sit, kneel, stand); absorb worship-inducing art*

To Explore: *How does having something to touch, smell or hear affect your worship experience?*

Caution: *Watch that your worship of God doesn't become worship of the artistic experience alone.*

Intellectual – II Timothy 3:14-17

Description: *Loving God with the mind; The road to the heart is through the head.*

Suggested Activity: *Do a year-long, in-depth study on one topic (theology, ethics, creeds, history).*

To Explore: *What annoys you most about other styles of worship? Ask God for His perspective on this. What does He say to you?*

Caution: *A deep understanding of God includes worship. Don't get proud or argumentative.*

Traditionalist – Exodus 40:12-15; I Timothy 4:1-5

Description: *Loving God through ritual, symbol and sacrament (the historic dimensions of faith).*

Suggested Activity: *Follow the church calendar. Practice liturgical prayer or fixed prayer times*

To Explore: *What rituals are necessary for you to be able to worship easily? What happens to your ability to worship when you are fellowshiping with a group that has little formal liturgy?*

Caution: *Don't let the form of your worship become an idol. Other ways to worship aren't "wrong"*

Enthusiast – I Chronicles 15:16; Luke 19:37-40

Description: *Loving God with excitement, anticipation, celebration and mystery.*

Suggested Activity: *Use your imagination to put yourself into the scene you are reading in the Bible. To understand how the participants were thinking, feeling and acting.*

To Explore: *How do you feel when others around you don't sing at all or sing softly through worship in song, don't raise their hands or move at all during worship?*

Caution: *Just because we feel good during a time of worship doesn't mean we have offered up our will in an appropriate manner... just because we feel down or flat doesn't mean we aren't effectively worshipping God" (170)*

Contemplative – Psalm 63; Song of Songs; John 14-17

Description: *Loving God through adoration.*

Suggested Activity: *Make use of the Jesus Prayer (Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner). Make use of centering prayer, meditative prayer or other forms of worship.*

To Explore: *Do you ever lose the sense of God's presence? What happens to you then – in your emotions? In your spirit? What do you do to restore that sense?*

Caution: *God can reveal Himself to us through other people as well as directly. Stay accountable & in community. Move beyond meditation toward alignment of your will and obedience to Christ.*

Ascetic – Joel 1:13-14; Matthew 4:1; 6:5-6

Description: *Loving God in solitude and simplicity.*

Suggested Activity: *Attend a silent retreat (the Monastery in Mission or visit the Mark Centre)*

To Explore: *Can you find solitude when you are with a group of people or in a busy phase of life?*

Caution: *Be intentional about seeking out other Christians with whom to fellowship.*

Activist – Psalm 7, 68, 10. Ezekiel 33:1-20

Description: *Loving God through confrontation and working for justice in the world.*

Suggested Activity: *Remember that everything that you say must be the truth. But you don't have to say it just because it is true. Carefully consider the outcomes you desire from your effort*

To Explore: *How do you feel when you are working for a cause and others don't seem interested in it, or even when they are, don't do anything to help? Are you able to resolve those feelings?*

Caution: *The shadow side of this temperament shows itself in acerbic tactlessness, running roughshod over others, not waiting for God or seeking discernment.*

Closing thoughts on personal worship and these pathways...

We all have at least some involvement in all of them. This is not a 'copout' for disliking worship or small groups or solitude. Rather it is freeing to discover that we are all wired to experience God differently and that it is OK to connect with God in the way that you were made.

For a more detailed description of these pathways, we would encourage you to read Gary Thomas' book and explore the companion study guide available at <http://assets1.mytrainsite.com/501122/sacredpathways.pdf>