

# SACRED PATHWAYS

Nine Ways to Connect with God

## INTRODUCTION

Gary Thomas, in his book *Sacred Pathways: Nine Ways to Connect with God*, draws out multiple ways Christians connect with God. The purpose of this Sacred Pathways Survey is to help you understand yourself and your relationship with God, your strengths and your weaknesses, what to do in times of stress, and how to challenge yourself. It's also important to share with those around you. There are multiple benefits to knowing your Sacred Pathway:

Learning your Sacred Pathway can help you lean into those practices and disciplines that most connect you with God—growing in faith and relationship. When we are struggling to 'feel' connected to God, it is sometimes difficult to understand why. Oftentimes people are encouraged to pray, read their Bible, or listen to worship music. Yes, that works for some (or in some seasons), but not everyone all the time. This is not to diminish the importance of prayer, Bible reading, or songs of praise; simply that these are not the only ways for God to connect to us.

Knowing the Sacred Pathway of the people closest to you (spouse, best friend, co-laborer, etc.) can help foster healthy connections. Either through accountability or shared expression. Learning that you and someone close to you have different ways of connecting to God can help encourage others to engage in those practices. Instead of feeling frustrated or disgruntled that they are not inherently practicing the same Pathway as you, you can encourage one another to connect with God in each others' Pathway. Also, those with the same Pathway give you a place to engage in it together.

When discipling others it is easy to disciple people into 'our ways' of life in Christ. The problem is that we should not be leading people to ourselves, but to the Way of Jesus. We can certainly encourage others to imitate us, as Paul did, but learning how someone growing in Christ connects with Him can help facilitate accountability and teach them more ways that they may experience God in their daily walk.

Finally, this is *not* a personality test. We all connect with God in **multiple** ways, this is not a strict description of the *one* way you relate to God. We relate to God, like any other relationship, in different ways in different seasons. It is good to know the top three or four ways you connect with God, but also know this could change in a different season of life. It is not that God is changing, but we change and in changing seasons connect to God in a different way. You may need to retake this in a new season of life.

## INSTRUCTIONS

This Sacred Pathways Survey looks at how you experience God. Based on your personality and spiritual background you have preferred ways of connecting with God.

There are six parts to this survey. Each part is a single beginning statement you will respond based on the finishing remark of the statement. Use the rating scale below to respond to each statement according to what is true of you (not what you wish was true):

**0:** *Not True of Me* → **5:** *Definitely True of Me*

Take your time with the questions. It may be easy to answer 3's or 4's on most of them but truly think and discern if the statement resonates with your experience and spirit. For example, do not think you are "wrong" because you resonate with Jesus as the Worthy King and *not* as an Obedient Son.

# PART I

## It's especially helpful for me to connect with God by...

1) Practicing spiritual traditions from my family or church history.

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

2) Imagining myself in a Gospel story, work of religious art, or spiritual.

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

3) Being in the beauty of nature.

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

4) Denying myself normal pleasures in order to pray.

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

5) Caring for someone who is hurting.

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

6) Experiencing unexplainable "God-moments".

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

7) Being quiet and alone—focused only on God's presence.

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

8) Learning more about who God is and life with Him.

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

9) Joining with others to defend the cause of the poor and needy.

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

# PART II

## I am drawn to the image of Jesus as...

10) The Fulfillment of the Scriptures. (*Jn. 5.39; Dn. 7.13-14*)

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

11) The Worthy King. (*Lk. 24.50-53; Rv. 5.9-14*)

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

12) The Speaker of Truth. (*Jn. 14.6; Ps. 25.5*)

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

13) Immanuel—God with us. (*Mt. 1.23; Is. 7.14*)

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

14) The Just Judge. (*Mk. 11.15-17; Is. 11.1-9*)

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

15) The Humble Servant. (*Jn. 13.1-5; Ph. 2.3-11*)

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

16) The Obedient Son. (*Lk. 22.41-42; Is. 53*)

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

17) The Bridegroom. (*Ep. 5.25-32; Rv. 19.9*)

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

18) The Gardener. (*Jn. 20.15; Ge. 2.8*)

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

# PART III

## I enjoy worshipping God by...

19) Receiving Communion, lighting a candle, or kneeling before a cross.

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

20) Taking a hike through the woods.

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

21) Loving my neighbor and meeting others' needs.

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

22) Supporting the marginalized, defenseless, and outcasts.

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

23) Reading His Word and accurately applying it.

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

24) Celebrating Him through the creative arts.

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

25) Fasting in solitude and silence.

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

26) Praying in my secret place.

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

27) Liturgy, symbol, and sacrifice.

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

# PART IV

## I relate to Jesus' act of...

28) Preaching good news to the poor, releasing the captives, and setting the oppressed free. *(Lk. 4.16-21)*

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

29) Withdrawing into the Wilderness to fast. *(Mt. 4.1-11)*

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

30) Celebrating the feasts of old. *(Jn. 7.2; 10.22, 55)*

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

31) Letting Thomas touch the holes in His hands and side. *(Jn. 20.24-29)*

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

32) Using the birds and flowers as illustrations while teaching upon a grassy hill. *(Mt. 6.26-30)*

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

33) God bringing people across His path to minister to. *(Lk. 7.11-17)*

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

34) Debating the religious leaders. *(Mk. 12.13-40)*

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

35) Compassion for the woman bleeding for twelve years. *(Mk. 5.25-34)*

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

36) Praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. *(Lk. 22.39-44)*

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

# PART V

## I benefit especially from speakers and authors who help me to...

37) Be disciplined to make more space in my life and my soul for God.

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

38) Love God all the time in the secret place of my heart.

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

39) Believe that God works in mysterious ways.

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

40) See, taste, touch, and hear God.

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

41) Learn theology or how to defend my faith.

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

42) Grow in compassion and service.

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

43) Remember the stories and practices of Bible heroes and saints from the past.

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

44) Care for and serve God's creation.

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

45) Stand against injustice.

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

# PART VI

**The following statement resonates as “my heart's cry” in comparison to the other statements:**

46) “Let me be outdoors”

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

47) “Let me experience”

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

48) “Let me remember”

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

49) “Let me be alone”

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

50) “Let me conquer”

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

51) “Let me care”

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

52) “Let me celebrate”

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

53) “Let me feel”

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5

54) “Let me think”

0 |  1 |  2 |  3 |  4 |  5



# CALCULATING

Use the following scale to calculate the points for each of the numbered statements:

0 = **0pt** | 1 = **1pt** | 2 = **2pt** | 3 = **4pt** | 4 = **6pt** | 5 = **7pt**

**ACTIVIST:** Loving God through Confrontation

$$\underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} = \underline{\quad}$$

9            14            22            28            45            50            TOTAL

**ASCETIC:** Loving God in Solitude and Simplicity

$$\underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} = \underline{\quad}$$

4            16            25            29            37            49            TOTAL

**CAREGIVER:** Loving God by Loving Others

$$\underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} = \underline{\quad}$$

5            15            21            35            42            51            TOTAL

**CONTEMPLATIVE:** Loving God through Adoration

$$\underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} = \underline{\quad}$$

7            17            26            36            38            53            TOTAL

**ENTHUSIAST:** Loving God with Mystery and Celebration

$$\underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} = \underline{\quad}$$

6            11            24            33            39            52            TOTAL

**INTELLECTUAL:** Loving God with the Mind

$$\underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} = \underline{\quad}$$

8            12            23            34            41            54            TOTAL

**NATURALIST:** Loving God in Creation

$$\underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} = \underline{\quad}$$

3            18            20            32            44            46            TOTAL

**SENSATE:** Loving God with the Senses

$$\underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} = \underline{\quad}$$

2            13            19            31            40            47            TOTAL

**TRADITIONALIST:** Loving God through Ritual and Symbol

$$\underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} + \underline{\quad} = \underline{\quad}$$

1            10            27            30            43            48            TOTAL

Write down your four highest Pathways (*Low=0-12 | Mid=13-22 | High=23+*)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# ACTIVIST

## Loving God through Confrontation

Activists love God by standing up for righteousness and justice. Activists need to find the right balance—indeed, the balance modeled by Christ who regularly interspersed times of spiritual refreshment with intense ministry. Activism can take the form of Christian activism, social reform, or confronting error and evil. Writers, preachers, politicians, academics, artists, and homemakers can all be activists, faithful in their own sphere to stand up for the truth. Activists will never be satisfied playing it safe. They need to experience the exhilaration of seeing a miraculous God come through in miraculous ways.

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# ASCETIC

## Loving God in Solitude and Simplicity

The ascetic temperament gravitates toward solitude, austerity, simplicity, and deep commitment. It's the "monastic" temperament, so to speak, representing believers who aren't afraid of discipline, severity, and solitude—indeed, believers who find that these elements awaken their souls to God's presence. Ascetics experience God away from worldly distractions and have no need for anything other than God and the Spirit.

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# CAREGIVER

## Loving God by Loving Others

For caregivers, acts of mercy are a very practical way for them to show their love for God and to grow in their love for God. Caregivers may hear God more clearly when caring for someone than when they sit quietly in prayer. Caregivers have found that one of the most profound ways they can love God is to love others. For caregivers, giving care isn't a chore but a form of worship.

# CONTEMPLATIVE

Loving God through Adoration

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. Contemplatives live for the love of God. They want nothing more than some privacy and quiet to gaze upon the face of their heavenly lover and give all of themselves to God.

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# ENTHUSIAST

Loving God with Mystery and Celebration

Enthusiasts enjoy a celebratory form of 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. Enthusiasts long to preserve the mystery of faith. They understand that there are certain things about God and Christianity that we simply can't fully understand. They are open to the spiritual world and believe in a God who is powerful and who acts.

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# INTELLECTUAL

Loving God with the Mind

Intellectuals feel that to be growing in Christ, they need to have their mind stimulated with Scriptures and other reading materials and intellectual pursuits. They need to be challenged, if they are not learning new things about God then their relationship with him feels stagnant. Intellectuals remind us of the high calling of loving God with our minds.

# NATURALIST

Loving God in Creation

The naturalist seeks to leave the formal architecture and the padded pews to enter an entirely new “cathedral”, a place that God himself has built: Creation. Any place that has some trees, a stream, or, at minimum, open skies can be God’s cathedral. Naturalists have found that getting outside can literally flood parched hearts and soften the hardest soul. Naturalists often learn their best lessons in the out-doors. Three particularly come to mind: they visualize scriptural truths, they see God more clearly, and they learn to rest.

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# SENSATE

Loving God with the Senses

Sensates are moved more by a sensuous worship experience than by anything else. By sensuous we are referring to the five senses: taste, touch, smell, sound, and sight. When we embrace the use of the senses—which God created—we open up entirely new avenues of worship. God created our senses, enjoyment through the senses was His idea. Sensates experience God in concrete, visible, palpable symbols. They see God in beauty, are creative and artistic, and enjoy God’s creation.

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# TRADITIONALIST

Loving God through Ritual and Symbol

Religious practices are how men and women use the physical world to embody spiritual truths. There are three elements of the traditionalist pathway: ritual (or liturgical pattern); symbol (or significant image); and sacrifice. Through ritual and ceremonies, traditionalists in turn make order out of chaos.