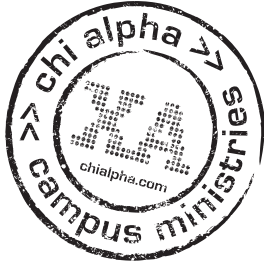


# **How to Take a Personal Retreat with God**

**by Sally M. Herman**



ASSEMBLIES OF GOD  
U.S. MISSIONS  
*...that none perish*

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# Preface

Sally and I take personal, spiritual retreats regularly and have done so for decades. A personal retreat is not a vacation or an extended day-off, though refreshment is often a beneficial by-product. It is an extended time alone with God where we open up our hearts, ask questions we need answers to, and discover ways to solve some sticky problems. In a word, what we seek most from our time alone with God is Clarity.

For me, I seek clarity on major decisions or on specific direction to take. I pray about difficult situations I find myself in, or seek guidance on how to help friends who are facing challenging times. Clarity is another way of saying I need dedicated time to regain my focus, refresh my purpose, and recalibrate my priorities.

The whirlwind of daily life sometimes blows me off of the main things in my life. I ask the Lord to help me to remake the main things the main things.

I want a private place where I can walk and pray, think without distraction, and write on large post-it notes. I find it to be an interactive conversation with Jesus where I reveal to Him where I am, and He opens a window on the immediate, and sometimes, distant future. It may not be a highly detailed roadmap, but at the least, I find myself back on the right path. As it pertains to personal, spiritual retreats, my only regret is I didn't take them more often.

Sally has directed many friends and interns on how to take a personal retreat. Often she even goes along to serve as an onsite guide and sometimes as a confidante. This booklet, *How to Take a Personal Retreat with God*, reflects what she does on her

retreats and the guidance she offers to others.

The advice is practical, but the benefit for the intern is learning how to listen to God during an extended time of unplugged focus. As you follow her suggestions you will discover her heart, and you will experience a meaningful conversation with Jesus. And this conversation will make a significant difference when you re-enter the "real" world.

It is our prayer you will be able to say like King David, "We had intimate talks with each other and worshiped together in the Temple," (Psalm 55:14, GNT).

Harvey A. Herman, DSL  
Springfield, MO – 2014

# Endorsements

Gina White: “The personal retreat teaching/experience during my Campus-Missionary-in-Training internship really sparked an awareness of the necessity of extended, prayerful reflection in ministry. It has become my practice to take a personal retreat before and after each semester (four times a year). I have also noticed in my students that there is a constant challenge in getting them to value slowing down at times. The retreat has proved vital in my ministry—both in times of challenge and times of celebration.”

Bryan Bessette: “About two weeks ago, I pulled out my notes from that particular personal retreat. I had opened them a couple of times before and clarified some of the language, but I am amazed that as much as I have changed in 13 years, the personal mission and values I wrote during that retreat are as true and guiding to me now as they were when I first attempted to articulate in words what I felt the Spirit of God had put in me at that time.”

Kate Cory Williamson: “The personal retreat was powerful in that it simply provided a dedicated time for me to seek God. The structure also helped me to think through things and use the time wisely; I might have wondered what to do with the time if I hadn't had any guidance.”

# Before You Go

If you've never had the pleasure of participating in a personal retreat time, there are a few things you should know before you go.

First, read this booklet to familiarize yourself with the material before you plan your getaway.

Second, turn off your electronic devices. Leave your laptop at home. Once you arrive at the site, turn off your cell phone. Use a hardcopy Bible and a notebook for reading and reflection. For safety's sake, let someone know where you are going and when you plan to return before you leave.

Third, select a comfortable location. For some, a strenuous hike is ideal, while others may plan a visit to a quiet and enormous cathedral.

Do a little research and find a place that allows you to be comfortable, quiet, loud if necessary, alone and safe. Some ideas are an overnight camp, a room at a bed and breakfast, a local college campus during the summer break, an extended walk around a friend's farm, a reservation at a retreat center or a quiet study room in the back of the campus library.

Based on where you are going, the expected weather, and your anticipated activity level, pack your personal items accordingly. Pack your meals or make preparations to eat ahead of time if you aren't fasting. If you are fasting some or all of the experience, be sure to pack plenty of juice and water.

Fourth, while on your personal retreat, expect God to speak. You might find your mind wanders easily or you are simply

exhausted. You'll find times throughout the schedule where a time for nap is available. If you feel your thoughts are scattered and you are concerned with forgetting to talk to God about something, simply stop and make a list of everything on your heart. You may or may not spend time with God on each item, but you won't forget and can choose those items you wish to focus on.

Last, there are a few resources you need before you leave for your retreat. Take a moment while you have access to the Internet and download *Invitation to Solitude and Silence* by Ruth Haley Barton (mp3 from [christianaudio.com](http://christianaudio.com)). You may also benefit from reading chapter 7 (e.g., Silence) in Richard Foster's book, *The Celebration of Discipline*. Phase Two suggests you listen to a song entitled *OK* by Mutemath at the end of the session. The lyrics are in the notes.

The goal of a personal retreat is to unplug from all digital devices. You may, however, put the Mutemath song, and even the Barton mp3 file, on your smartphone to listen to at the appropriate moment on the retreat. Just be sure to guard against getting distracted by the use of electronic devices during a time of solitude and silence.



# Introduction to Solitude

Solitude and silence is a mystery—and in time you will discover what works for you. I am giving you a reason to care, a place to start, and some inspiration from others who have found the benefits from solitude.

“I can do everything through Christ who gives me strength,” (Philippians 4:13). Really? Everything?

The Problem: Can you fly? If you ran track, would you have limits to your speed? Can you befriend every person you meet on a deeply emotional level, and still be sane? Can you eat as much as you want and never worry about your health? Can you work as hard as you might and never tire?

We all have limits. Then what does Paul mean, “I can do everything...”? Is it possible what Paul meant was not, “since I know Christ, I am capable of all things,” but, “since I know Christ, he works the impossible through me”?

The Remedy: Solitude and silence are about giving in. Surrender. It is simply saying, “God, only through you is this done.”

“Take, O Lord, and receive my entire liberty, my memory, my understanding and my whole will. All that I am and all that I possess You have given me: I surrender it all to You to be disposed of according to Your will. Give me only Your love and Your grace; with these I will be rich enough, and will desire nothing else,” (Offering prayer of St. Ignatius of Loyola, c.1525). And what is the result?

The Result: The person who cultivates a “private place” with the Lord, a common ground, finds in the stillness God’s healing and

power are stronger than in high-octane crowd-gazing at God's miracles.

“In quiet and silence the faithful soul makes progress, the hidden meanings of the Scriptures become clear, and the eyes weep with devotion every night. Even as one learns to grow still, he draws closer to the Creator and farther from the hurly-burly of the world. As one divests himself of friends and acquaintances, he is visited by God and his holy angels,” (Thomas a Kempis, c. 1420).

What may we learn through solitude and silence? First, we are sinners saved through the grace of Christ's sacrifice. Although we walk in grace every day, we also sin every day. Solitude is a place of repentance. Come to God with your sin and let Him make you new again.

Second, for you to grow up as a “disciple” of Christ, your relationship with Him needs to move to “friendship and companionship.” It was good for you when you were young in Christ to bring Him your prayers of self-interest like: “I need this...” and “Please forgive me for that”—but, now you learn to give God your unscheduled time to simply be. He wants to sit and talk with you. God is not just interested in your “spiritual life,” He's interested in your entire life.

What will it cost you? Comfort— the silence may make you wiggle. You'll be pressed to not talk, to sit still, and focus your mind. You may want to wander, or get irritable, or choose to simply give up. But don't! Take a deep breath, focus in again, and ask God to help you focus.

Time— you may wonder if there is something better that you could do with your time. “Surely God doesn't want me to just “waste” moments like this in silence.” Give Him a chance.

Change– God may speak to you about the most unexpected things, things needing change, priorities to be realigned. You will learn to surrender your will.

Your reward? In the words of philosopher Soren Kierkegaard, “Now, with God’s help, I shall become myself.”

# Getting Started Exercises

Looking for a place to start? Try a few of the following exercises and remember—take your time.

## Exercise 1

The following is a prayer by St. Augustine and a short poem by St. Ignatius. After reading the prayer, you may want to write your own prayer of thankfulness and gratitude to God for the way He orchestrated and saved your life. When you look at the words of St. Ignatius, what strikes you about the way you are growing and how God is changing you?

### **St. Augustine of Hippo, I Came to You Late, c. 400**

I came to You late, O Beauty so ancient and new. I came to love You late. You were within me and I was outside where I rushed about wildly searching for You like some monster loose in Your beautiful world. You were with me but I was not with You. You called me, You shouted to me, You wrapped me in Your splendor, You broke past my deafness, You bathed me in Your Light, You sent my blindness reeling. You gave out such a delightful fragrance and I drew it in and came breathing hard after you. I tasted, and it made me hunger and thirst; You touched me, and I burned to know Your peace.

Your Prayer:

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## St. Ignatius

A thick and shapeless tree trunk would never believe that it could become a statue, a miracle of sculpture, and would never submit itself to the chisel of the sculptor, who sees by her genius what she can make of it.

Your Response:

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## Exercise 2

Consider the beauty of God's creation. Begin to draw or meditate on what you love most in God's creation. The strength of old trees, new life in flowers, the cold ground waiting for spring. What season of life are you in? Is it spring (new growth and life), summer (a whirlwind of activity and excitement), fall (change in direction or relationships), or winter (God seems distant, there's no feeling in your worship)? Begin to pray and ask God to reveal what season of life you are in and how you can be obedient to what He's teaching you.

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## Exercise 3

Is there something on your mind that keeps you up at night? Start there. Ask God to reveal to you why you might be worrying or restless. Does this require some of your attention?

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## Excercise 4

Imagine going to a masked ball. You can be anyone you want—what person would you be? When others look at your disguise, what kind of person do they see? Begin to list adjectives describing this masked individual, such as:

Strong	Easygoing	Flashy
Timid	Guilty	Loud
Fearful	Charming	Soft
Happy	Funny	Helpful
Worried	Cute	Inspiring
Contented	Accomplished	Influential
Excitable	Common	Etc.

Now if people looked at who you really are, how would your list change? Similar or different? Why? In what ways? Take these two “faces” and begin to pray. Ask God to reveal any insecurity or uncertainty He would like you to overcome.

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## Exercise 5

When you look into your future, past your current status (e.g., to graduation, your first job, marriage, a child, etc.), what would you like to accomplish? Begin to pray and think about a preferred future you'd like to set for yourself over the next five to eight years. It could be personal, related to work, concerning family, etc. Begin to ask God to reveal if your desires match with His. Try writing a personal vision statement that corresponds with your goals (e.g., I will devote myself to knowing God and making him known). How will that vision statement change the way you're living now?

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## Exercise 6

Meditate on this verse: "Christ himself carried our sins in his body to the cross, so that we might die to sin and live for righteousness. It is by his wounds that you have been healed," (1 Peter 2:24, GNT). What is your response?

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# Sample Schedule

## One-Day Solitude Retreat

\*Note following section on “Phases of Retreat”

Note: This suggested schedule assumes you listened to the Ruth Haley Barton recording *Invitation to Solitude and Silence*, and read the chapter on solitude in *The Celebration of Discipline* by Richard Foster before you arrived.

8:00 –9:00 am	Arrive and get settled
9:00 – 10:00 am	Getting Started Exercise
10:00 – 11:00 am	Phase One: Praise
11:00 – 12:00 pm	Phase Two: You and God Confession, Repentance, Forgiveness
12:00 –12:50 pm	Lunch or Fasting
1:00 – 2:00pm	Phase Three: Listening
2:00 – 3:00 pm	Phase Four: Spiritual Gifts and Personal Goals
3:00 – 4:00 pm	Phase Five: Beyond This Year
4:00 – 4:20 pm	Meditating in His Presence
4:20 – 5:00 pm	Debrief, journal, reflect, and pray Pack up and leave



# Sample Schedule

## Three-Day Solitude Retreat

\*Note following section on “Phases of Retreat”

### Day One

- |                |  |
|----------------|--|
| 3:00 – 4:00 pm | Arrive and get settled   |
| 4:00 – 5:00 pm | Read “Introduction to Solitude” in <i>The Celebration of Discipline</i> by Richard Foster. Listen to <i>Invitation to Solitude and Silence</i> by Ruth Haley Barton. |
| 5:00 – 6:30 pm | Dinner or fasting  |
| 6:30 – 8:00 pm | Phase One: Praise  |

Note: You may find that you need to sleep—feel free to doze off as needed.

### Day Two

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| 8:00 – 9:00 am  | Breakfast or fasting   |
| 9:00 – 10:30 am | Phase Two: You and God<br>Confession, Repentance, Forgiveness  |
| 12:00 – 1:30 pm | Lunch or Fasting   |
| 1:30 – 3:00 pm  | Phase Three: Listening   |
| 4:00 – 5:00 pm  | Reflections from the day. (This may be done as a group if you are with others. All other parts of the retreat are to be done alone, except for meals.) |
| 5:30 – 7:30 pm  | Dinner or fasting  |
| 7:30 – 9:00 pm  | Phase Four: Gifting and Personal Goals   |

## **Day Three**

9:00 – 10:00 am	Breakfast or fasting
10:00 – 11:30 am	Phase Five: Beyond This Year
11:30 am – 12:00 pm	Debrief, journal, reflect, and pray
12:00 pm	Pack up and leave

# Phases of a Retreat

## Phase One: Praise

During this time, focus your prayers on being thankful. Really concentrate on not asking God for anything—but simply telling Him how good He is. Allow Him to remind you of times in your life when He blessed you. Use the following Scriptures to help you to follow the directions and questions at the end of this phase. Also, take note of the prayers included in the appendix.

This part of the retreat is all about Him and Him alone. In the Old Testament, the Israelites built altars to the Lord as a way of remembering what He had done. Make this an altar-making time. Reflect on all that He has done and journal, or write a prayer of thankfulness, etc.

### Scriptures

“But you, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head.”

– Psalm 3:3

“The LORD is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.”

– Psalm 9:9

“But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the LORD, because he has dealt bountifully with me.”

– Psalm 13:5-6

“Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge. I say to the LORD, “You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you.” As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones, in whom is all my

delight. The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply.... The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot. The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance. I bless the LORD who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me. I have set the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure. For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption. You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”  
– Psalm 16

“The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.”  
– Psalm 18:2

“The LORD is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him.”  
– Psalm 28:7

“I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth.”  
– Psalm 34:1

“Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Let your glory be over all the earth!”  
– Psalm 108:5

“The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.”  
– Psalm 145:8

## Reflection Questions

What has God done for you?

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How have you seen God's goodness around you?

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What characteristics of God are very clear to you, e.g., His mercy, kindness, holiness?

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What words would you use to describe God?

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How are you feeling right now, peaceful, tired, content, frustrated?

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Ask God to give you an awareness of His presence. How are you aware of Him?

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Are there any particular songs, pictures, stories, scriptures, or phrases that keep coming to mind? If so, write them down here.

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What things surprised you about this segment of the retreat?

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## Phase Two: You and God

### Confession & Repentance

During this phase of the retreat, focus on confession and repentance. Scripture tells us the “Sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart He will not despise,” (Psalm 51:17). As you confess and repent, remember He is the One who is faithful to forgive us. This may be tiring. If needed, take a nap.

### Scriptures

“But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house. I will bow down toward your holy temple in the fear of you.”

– Psalm 5:7

“Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!”

– Psalm 139:23-24

### Reflection Questions

What do you need to confess, and to whom?

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What are some things/patterns/habits in your life God wants to change? Allow Him to speak to you and show you things He wants to be different. Be prepared for Him to show you things you would not normally think of.

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## **Forgiveness**

For the last part of this section, dwell in the forgiveness of God. Reflect on being washed clean—a debt erased.

### **Scripture**

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”

– Romans 8:1-4

### **Reflection Question**

Ask, “Father, when you look at me, what do you see? Tell me what you see through your eyes.” Take some time to listen for His response.

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Listen to the song *OK* by Mutemath

Down on my knees down on my face  
You just say it's OK  
So many days I've thrown away  
You just say it's OK  
I don't think I could ever repay  
Your perfect grace, but it's OK

It's OK, It's OK  
It's OK, It's OK  
You've become my embrace  
Just tell me it's OK

Your precious words intoxicate  
A heart that aches; it's OK  
You don't recall my past mistakes  
You just say it's OK  
The human mind can't calculate  
Your perfect grace, but it's OK

Even though you've seen a thousand times  
I've let you down  
You're always there if I should call your name  
You're unashamed, unashamed

## Phase Three: Listening

This phase may be difficult, but hang in there. Don't talk... just listen. Listen with your heart, mind, ears—just be aware of God and trust Him to “speak” in a way you will recognize it is Him.

During this time, focus your mind on who God is—perhaps focus on one attribute of His nature. Or, you may want to focus on a particular verse or prayer and repeat the words over and over to God. Let the words take root in your heart and mind. Commit to memorizing that verse or prayer. If you get distracted, don't worry, just focus your mind again and keep going. You may want to take a walk during this time to just take in what God wants to say to you.

### Scriptures

“Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!”

– Psalm 27:14

“Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him;”

– Psalm 37:7a

### Reflection Questions

What do you hear?

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What pictures, words, thoughts, come to mind?

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Ask God to show you how He sees you.

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## Phase Four: Gifting & Personal Goals

Seek God for specific direction for your life. Reflect on your talents, gifts, and abilities. All of those contribute in God's bigger picture for your life. He doesn't give us gifts without purpose.

You may want to read the article *The Art of Self-Leadership*. It may be good to take the *Sacred Pathways Inventory* by Gary Thomas. These are found in the appendix.

### Scripture

“For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there were none of them.”

– Psalm 139: 13-16

### Reflection Questions

What do you enjoy doing?

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What are you passionate about? What makes you angry, sad, or filled with compassion?

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What do you get excited about?

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What experiences have helped shape your life?

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Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 both discuss the body of Christ having many parts, each with their own function. What part do you play in the body of Christ? Teacher? Leader? Encourager?

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What are some things you would like to accomplish in the next one, three, five years?

What goals do you need to set to realize those dreams?

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What fears or things in life are you holding onto that you need to discard?

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What ways do you need to be stretched?

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Spend some time thinking about your future in Chi Alpha.

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How has God used Chi Alpha in your life?

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How does God want to use you in Chi Alpha?

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Where do you want to see Chi Alpha in five years?

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## Phase Five: Beyond this Year

The last phase of the retreat will focus on what may lie beyond this year. You have reflected on how God has wired you, you've spent a large portion of time with Him and now take some time to look forward. What does God want to do through you?

### Reflection Questions

When you think about your future, what do you think about doing?

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How do your hopes and aspirations match with what God is doing in you?

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Is there anyone in your life whom God is asking you to invest in more purposely? If so, who? How will you begin to do that?

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Where and/or how can you take action now to continue moving in the direction God is calling you?

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# Prayers

## Communion

O Lord Jesus Christ, Who said to your Apostles: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you," regard not my sins but the faith of Your Church, and deign to give her peace and unity according to Your will: Who live and reign, God, world without end. Amen.

## Solace

May Christ support us all the day long,  
Till the shadows lengthen,  
And the evening comes,  
And the busy world is hushed,  
And the fever of life is over,  
And our work is done.  
Then in his mercy  
May he give us a safe lodging  
And holy rest and peace at the last.  
Amen.

## Offering Prayer of St. Ignatius Loyola

Take, O Lord, and receive my entire liberty, my memory, my understanding and my whole will. All that I am and all that I possess You have given me: I surrender it all to You to be disposed of according to Your will. Give me only Your love and Your grace; with these I will be rich enough, and will desire nothing else.

## Days Beginning

- Lord, one more day to love you! –Brother Charles de Foucauld
- Jesus, watch over me always, especially today, or I shall betray you like Judas. –St. Philip Neri
- Lord, today is the day I begin! –St. Philip Neri
- Jesus, shine through me and be so in me that every person I come in contact with may feel your presence in my soul. – Cardinal John Henry Newman
- My God, send me thy Holy Spirit to teach me what I am and what thou art! –St. John Vianney
- May the Passion of Christ be ever in our heart. –St. Paul of the Cross
- And to be more with Him, more with Him, not merely with oneself. –Pope John Paul II

## Gloria (Praise)

Glory to God in the highest. And on earth peace to men of good will. We praise You. We bless You. We adore you. We glorify You. We give You thanks for Your great glory. O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father almighty. O Lord Jesus Christ, the Only-begotten Son. O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father: you Who take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us. You Who take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer. You Who sit at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us. For you alone are holy. You alone are the Lord. You alone, O Jesus Christ, are most high. Together with the Holy Spirit in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

## **St. Francis de Sales, Confidence in God**

It is good to mistrust ourselves, but how would that advantage us were we not to throw all our confidence on God, and to wait on His mercy? If you feel no such confidence, cease not on that account from making these acts and from saying to Our Lord: “Yet, O Lord, though I have no feeling of confidence in You, nevertheless, I know that You are my God, that I am all Yours, and that I have no hope but in Your goodness; so, I abandon myself entirely into Your Hands.” It is always in our power to make these acts; although we have difficulty in performing them, still there is no impossibility. Thus we testify faithfulness to our Lord.

### **You are Christ**

You are Christ, my Holy Father, my Tender God, my Great King, my Good Shepherd, my Only Master, my Best Helper, my Most Beautiful and my Beloved, my Living Bread, my Priest Forever, my Leader to my Country, my True Light, my Holy Sweetness, my Straight Way, my Excellent Wisdom, my Pure Simplicity, my Peaceful Harmony, my Entire Protection, my Good Portion, my Everlasting Salvation.

Christ Jesus, Sweet Lord, why have I ever loved, why in my whole life have I ever desired anything except You, Jesus my God? Where was I when I was not in spirit with You? Now, from this time forth, do you, all my desires, grow hot, and flow out upon the Lord Jesus: run . . . you have been tardy until now; hasten where you are going; seek Whom you are seeking. O, Jesus may he who loves You not be an anathema; may he who loves You not be filled with bitterness.

O, Sweet Jesus, may every good feeling that is fitted for Your

praise, love You, delight in You, adore You! God of my heart, and my Portion, Christ Jesus, may my heart faint away in spirit, and may You be my Life within me! May the live coal of Your Love grow hot within my spirit and break forth into a perfect fire; may it burn incessantly on the altar of my heart; may it glow in my innermost being; may it blaze in hidden recesses of my soul; and in the days of my consummation may I be found consummated with You! Amen.

– St. Augustine of Hippo

## Loving God

Take for your motto: Love has conquered me, it alone shall possess my heart.

– St. Margaret Mary

He is our clothing. In His love He wraps and holds us. He enfolds us for love and He will never let us go.

– Julian of Norwich

Love does not consist in shedding tears, nor in tasting sweetness and that tenderness in which one seeks consolation; it consists in serving God in justice, in strength of soul, and in humility.

– St. Teresa of Avila

Eternal goodness, You want me to gaze into You and see that You love me, to see that You love me gratuitously, so that I may love everyone with the very same love.

– St. Catherine of Siena

Love Him totally who gave Himself totally for Your love.

– St. Clare of Assisi

I am in Love, and out of it I will not go.

– C. S. Lewis

Let the root of love be within. Of this root nothing can spring but what is good.

– St. Augustine

I do not regret that I have given myself to love.

– St. Therese of Lisieux

So we must either love or die, because he who does not love remains a dead person.

– St. Francis de Sales

A wise lover values not so much the gift of the lover, as the love of the giver. He esteems the affection above the gift, and values every gift far below the Beloved. A noble lover is not content with a gift, but desires Myself above all gifts.

– Thomas a Kempis, Imitation of Christ

Remember that nothing is small in the eyes of God. Do all that you do with love.

– St. Therese of Lisieux

He who has a heart full of love always has something to give.

– Pope John XXIII

To love God is something greater than to know him.

– St. Thomas Aquinas

Man is the perfection of the Universe. The spirit is the perfection of man. Love is the perfection of the spirit, and charity that of love. Therefore, the love of God is the end, the perfection of the Universe.

– St. Francis de Sales



Perfection of life is the perfection of love. For love is the life of the soul.

– St. Francis de Sales

We should love God because He is God, and the measure of our love should be to love Him without measure.

– St. Bernard

If we love God and are faithful to Him, we shall be at peace, and this peace shall endure.

– St. Madeleine Sophie Barat

Love God, serve God; everything is in that.

– St. Clare of Assisi

May I no longer live save by Thee and for Thee. Be then my life, my love, my all.

– St. Margaret Mary

Faith lifts the soul, Hope supports it, Experience says it must, and Love says ... let it be!

– St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

Do not get all upset when difficulties come your way. Laugh in your enemy's face; you are in the arms of the Almighty. Therefore, let God be your strength and your love.

– St. Francis de Sales

All that you do for love is love. Fatigue and even death itself accepted for motives of love is nothing else but love! ....how happy are those who love the cross and carry it generously. It will appear in all its glory in the heavens when Christ Our Lord will come to judge the living and the dead. Heaven is the altar for all who are crucified; therefore, let us love the crosses that we meet as we go through life.

– St. Francis de Sales

Let my soul spend itself in Your praise, rejoicing for love.

– Thomas a Kempis

Love is a mighty power, a great and complete good; Love alone lightens every burden, and makes the rough places smooth. It bears every hardship as though it were nothing, and renders all bitterness sweet and acceptable. The love of Jesus is noble, and inspires us to great deeds; it moves us always to desire perfection.

– Thomas a Kempis

Heart of Love, I believe in Your goodness, I hope in Your mercy, I trust in Your love.

– Anonymous

Let us love, for love will give us everything.

– Jean-Pierre de Caussade

Complete Thy work, O Lord, and as Thou hast loved me from the beginning, so make me to love Thee unto the end.

– Cardinal John Henry Newman

Assembled and submitted to Catholic Prayers by Alice Claire Mansfield.

# Four Threats to Quiet Time

By Gina White

Overcoming Invasions of Intimacy with God

1 Kings 18:42; John 15:4

We all have problems in maintaining the quality and discipline of a daily quiet time with God. Of all the problems of meeting with Him, here are four big ones that loom like giants.

## Giant 1: Loss of Concentration

- “How do I increase concentration and keep my mind from wandering?” Before you go any further, answer this question on a separate sheet of paper. What are the causes of concentration loss for you?
- Prayer is our most effective giant killer for all kinds of concentration breakers. After that, preparation, planning, and the pad and pencil can serve as weapons to spring us from the trap of confusion and small accomplishments brought on by the confinements of concentration loss.

## Giant 2: Loss of Feeling

- Do these statements sound familiar to you?
- “Sometimes I just don’t sense God’s presence and I don’t know why.”
- “How do I worship when I really don’t want to?”
- We tend to live by our feelings. Yet as Christians, our responsibility, according to the Bible, is to be in control of our feelings. God doesn’t want us to dismiss our feelings. We must learn, however, to acknowledge them and then express them

in a way that honors God.

- I discovered this for myself when I wanted to have more personal worship in my devotional time. I began to take portions of the Psalms as if they were my own words. At first, this felt very awkward and unnatural. But the more I acted on my desire to worship God, the more I began to enjoy it.

## **Giant 3: Lack of Discipline**

The thorniest problem in discipline is keeping priorities. When we properly view faith as our responsibility but still struggle with discipline, we may have a problem with priorities. The Devil is no fool. He wants to keep us bottled up. Encouraging fuzzy or faulty priorities is his favorite trick.

- When you think of priorities, ask these questions:
  - “What do I want in life—do I really want to know God?”
  - “How can I get there—what steps do I have to take?”

“How much am I willing to pay?” It’s going to cost something.

## **Giant 4: Lack of Practice**

Once we understand time with God as an expression of a love friendship, we understand how crucial practice is. We learn to do God’s Word and continue its work over the long haul. That is what makes permanent changes in our lives and the lives of others. –Taken from *The Priority of Knowing God* by Peter V. Deison. Copyright © 1990, Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, MI. Used with permission.

Reflect on and/or Discuss

- What is the biggest giant preventing your time alone with

God?

- What one goal can you make (and measure) to improve your fellowship with God? What steps can you take to help achieve your goal?
- What might God want to do for and in you through prayer and reading Scripture?

# The Art of Self-Leadership

The toughest leadership assignment is leading your self. It is the greatest challenge.

Questions to work through personally:

1	Is my calling sure?	Is this what God is calling me to do?
2	Is my vision clear?	A leader is responsible to determine the destination or the trajectory for self, before you accept leadership of an organization.
3	Is my passion hot?	Do I need to stir my gifts?
4	Am I developing my gifts?	Can you name your top strengths and gifts? You can't let your gifts/strengths float. You need to develop it to its greatest potential.
5	Is my character submitted to Christ?	Leadership is based on credibility. People follow integrity. Trust is the currency of leadership. When trust is gone, so is your leadership.
6	Is my pride subdued?	"Why The Mighty Fall," Jim Collins. Five stages from greatness to irrelevance. God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.
7	Am I overcoming fear?	Fear can immobilize. Keeps you from doing what needs to be done. "The One in you is greater than the one in the world."
8	Am I facing my dark side?	Who is responsible for addressing your dark side other than you?



# Devotional: My Utmost for His Highest

## Self-Awareness

By Oswald Chambers

<http://www.utmost.org/self-awareness/>

God intends for us to live a well-rounded life in Christ Jesus, but there are times when that life is attacked from the outside. Then we tend to fall back into self-examination, a habit that we thought was gone. Self-awareness is the first thing that will upset the completeness of our life in God, and self-awareness continually produces a sense of struggling and turmoil in our lives. Self-awareness is not sin, and it can be produced by nervous emotions or by suddenly being dropped into a totally new set of circumstances. Yet it is never God's will that we should be anything less than absolutely complete in Him. Anything that disturbs our rest in Him must be rectified at once, and it is not rectified by being ignored but only by coming to Jesus Christ. If we will come to Him, asking Him to produce Christ-awareness in us, He will always do it, until we fully learn to abide in Him.

Never allow anything that divides or destroys the oneness of your life with Christ to remain in your life without facing it. Beware of allowing the influence of your friends or your circumstances to divide your life. This only serves to sap your strength and slow your spiritual growth. Beware of anything that can split your oneness with Him, causing you to see yourself as separate from Him. Nothing is as important as staying right spiritually. And the only solution is a very simple one—"Come to Me . . ." The intellectual, moral, and spiritual depth of our reality as a person is tested and measured by these words. Yet in every detail of our lives where we are found not to be real, we would rather dispute the findings than come to Jesus.



# Sacred Pathways

## Discovering Your Path to God<sup>1</sup>

“Do you know your way to God?” This question is both a very valuable question and at the same time a dangerous one. Valuable in that not everyone cultivates their relationships in the same way. For many the rubric to read your Bible, pray everyday, and then go to a weekly Chi Alpha meeting produce increasing love and understanding of God. For others they need this, yet they long for more.

It is a dangerous question because of a popular assumption—“There are many paths to God.” Pure, orthodox Christianity unequivocally and unashamedly maintains there is one God the Father, and Jesus is the One and Only Door path to God. Jesus sees no other way for people to be saved other than through Him.

However, how do you build a relationship with the Father who created the universe, is everywhere present, is all powerful, perfectly holy, without sin, and possesses perfect knowledge? In all probability, a simple one, two, three step formula is often inadequate to know and love this God.

Not only is God beyond our full comprehension, but also we are “fearfully and wonderfully made” by God. He is beyond knowing fully, and we are complex beings. Nonetheless, God made us with a deep desire and ability to know and love Him.

We perceive Him and relate to Him through all that He has made, through all He has revealed, and through all He has done with others throughout history. God is committed to revealing Himself

<sup>1</sup> *Sacred Pathways: Discovering Your Soul's Path to God*, Gary Thomas, Zondervan, 2000

to us, and He can do so through many avenues.

Gary Thomas calls them sacred pathways. They're like our spiritual temperaments. How do you best relate to God? When, where, and how do you best draw near to God? You may be an extrovert or introvert, sensing or intuitive, thinking or feeling, a judging or perceptive person. Our personality temperaments give us a hint that we may draw near to God in more than one way.

We'll call these spiritual temperaments—Sacred Pathways—A variety of paths that lead to Jehovah God—the God of the Bible and the Father to whom Jesus prayed. Our hope here is you will discover greater ability to relate to the Creator God and with His Son Jesus Christ.

# “Naturalists” Loving God Out of Doors

## Contours: Mapping This Land

- These 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 the spiritual lessons we may learn by observing the metamorphosis a caterpillar experiences 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, e.g., 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.

## Roadkill: Running off the Road

Naturalists need to be aware of these dangers:

### 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 may 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.”

Nevertheless, do not allow the lie of pantheism rob you of worshiping God through an appreciation of what he has made.

## **Pointers: Tips for the Journey**

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 in 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 us.

# “Sensates”

## Loving God with the Senses

### Contours: Mapping This Land

- Some Christians are moved by sensuous worship.
- 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 a truncated 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 seven days, (Ezekiel 1, 3).
- John is overwhelmed by loud trumpet voices, blazing eyes, and sounds of rushing waters as he writes to the seven 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.

### Roadkill: Running off the Road

Sensates need to be aware of these dangers:

#### Worshipping Without Conviction or Content

Words may 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.

## Worshipping Worship

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

## **Pointers: Tips for the Journey**

### 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

### Contours: Mapping This Land

- Many rightly fear a form of faith that possesses no substance so they stress, “Christianity is a relationship, not a religion.”
- We must remember 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 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 New Testament figures made it clear that no one will be saved through religious observance alone; but they also made it clear, by their example, that Christians can be nourished by certain religious practices.

### Roadkill: Running off the Road

Traditionalists need to be aware of these dangers:

#### Serving God Without Knowing God

Ritual may 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). Ritual without substance, says Jesus, 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 filling us with insincerity.

## Pointers: Tips for the Journey

Three elements for traditionalist pathways:

### Ritual

- Find a special way to celebrate the religious holidays, e.g., Good Friday, Easter, Christmas, Pentecost. Place a reminder in your calendar.
- Read Scripture aloud.
- People throughout history read Psalms 50, 62, 90, 103, and 140 daily or regularly.
- Read something from Pascal on November 23rd, the day he had a life-changing experience with God. Read Bonhoeffer on April 9th—the day of his martyrdom. Look up Augustine's birthday and read *The City of God* 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 may wear a cross to remind them to stay pure. Others might 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**

### **Contours: Mapping This Land**

- The ascetic temperament gravitates toward solitude, austerity, simplicity, and deep commitment.
- As a “monastic” temperament, it represents believers who are not afraid of discipline, severity, and solitude.
- 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 go against their culture to 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.
- The vow was for a set period of time, then they would 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. He returned to solitude during difficult moments in ministry, (Mark 1:35; Matthew 26:36).
- Jesus taught prayer should be done in secret.
- The devout are called to mourn, see: Lamentations, Daniel and Joel.
- Naturalists might go to a beautiful countryside; an Ascetic may seek a barren land.
- 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 so that God might be loved more.”

- Ascetics stress deeds before words.
- True ascetics are strict with themselves but treat others with supernatural gentleness.

## **Roadkill: Running Off the Road**

Ascetics need to be aware of these dangers:

### Overemphasizing Personal Piety

Instead of outward displays of piety, God calls people to administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. 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 the spiritual experiences that we participate in today.

## **Pointers: Tips for the Journey**

The three worlds of the Ascetic:

## 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

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 a major portion of their lives for their passionate pursuit of God.
- Fast, deny yourself some pleasure or comfort, and then focus on purity of mind and heart.
- Some Christians find the middle of the night to be a good time for prayer and worship.
- Rise earlier than normal one day per week.
- Try to be silent for a few hours at a time.
- Fast from TV, radio, music, movies, or certain types of food, desserts, meats.
- Take a personal retreat for several hours, a day, weekend or a week at a time.
- When sickness comes, the hardship we must endure may actually serve to strengthen us.
- Endure hardship rather than fight it. Don't always demand to be warm when it is cold. Don't always choose to be pampered.

When sickness, heat, cold, hunger, or tiredness come, you may either adopt a demanding spirit and stunt your spiritual growth, or embrace them, learn from them, and mature in your faith.

# **“Activists”**

## **Loving God Through Confrontation**

### **Contours: Mapping This Land**

- Every activist learns faithful obedience doesn't always result in immediate success.
- 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.
- When God calls us to an activist posture, we must leave the results with Him or we'll be consumed and driven by success rather than by the Holy Spirit. Beware; some activists just cannot accept defeat.
- The activist must be careful when intercession becomes accusation.
- 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 example of Moses, the “reluctant activist,” is appropriate.
- The fear involved in confrontation creates a certain dependence on God that isn't normally there.
- Facing this fear and stepping out in faith, and finding God faithful as he steps in to carry you, may do wonders for your intimacy with God.

- See: Proverbs 24:11-12, Psalms 7, 68 and 140; Ezekiel 33:1-20.
- Activism may leave you feeling depleted, therefore you must find other ways to supplement your spiritual nourishment.

## **Roadkill: Running Off the Road**

Ascetics need to be aware of these dangers:

### Becoming Judgmental

- Activists often go wrong when making the leap in logic to assume the holier they become, the less able they will be able to tolerate sinners.
- Maturity is evidenced by eagerness to see sin leave our lives, and yet become more compassionate toward other sinners.
- A self-righteous, critical attitude is not a reflection of the compassion of Christ.

### Ambition and Sex

- 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 elitist has no appreciation for different spiritual gifts and callings.

### Preoccupation with Activity and Statistics

The stool an activist stands on have three legs: incerity, effort, and thoughtful prayer.

## Lack of Emphasis on Personal Sanctity

Remove the log from your own eye before you reach for the splinter in your neighbor's eye.

## Pointers: Tips for the Journey

Forms of activism:

### Writing

Many writers have changed the destinies of millions through the written word, e.g. 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 Christians may disagree, they each must first, be fully informed; second, prayerfully decisive; and third, fully involved.
- Activists must also actively confront error and evil. Sometimes truth equals confrontation.

### Prayer and Activists

If there is ever a temperament that must be plugged into prayer, it must be the activists. They need to learn from the Contemplatives and Ascetics.

### Walking Prayer

Here you 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.

### Processions

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

### Intercession

Pray with your Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other. If you are an activist, do yourself and the Church a favor: cultivate an active prayer life.

# “Caregivers”

## Loving God by Loving Others

### Contours: Mapping This Land

- 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 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,” (Phil 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,” (Heb 6:10).
- “Pure and faultless” religion is looking after orphans and widows in their distress, (James 1:27).
- The writers of the New Testament leave us without any doubt as to the importance of loving God by loving those he created.

### Roadkill: Running Off the Road

Caregivers need to be aware of these dangers:

#### Judging

Remember the lesson of Martha and 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 God makes our home a priority. See 1 Timothy 5:8. Don't neglect your family while you save the world.

## Pointers: Tips for the Journey

The caregiver temperament incorporates many different avenues of loving God through serving others, e.g.,

- 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
- 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
- Watching the children of some tired parents
- Giving free cookies out on campus
- Raking leaves of elderly
- Providing free firewood for needy
- Shovel snow

# **“Enthusiasts”**

## **Loving God with Mystery and Celebration**

### **Contours: Mapping This Land**

- 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 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 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.

### **Roadkill: Running Off the Road**

Enthusiasts need to be aware of these dangers:

#### Seeking Experiences for Experiences’ Sake

- Beware—many spiritual manifestations are expressly forbidden for a Christian, see Deut. 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.

## Pointers: Tips for the Journey

- 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 God may 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**

### **Contours: Mapping This Land**

- 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 Deut. 7:7-8 and 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.” – Thomas Merton
- Contemplatives remind us of a startling fact: There is one thing each individual Christian may do that nobody else can: give our personal love and affection to God.

## Roadkill: Running Off the Road

Contemplatives need to be aware of these dangers:

### 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.

## Pointers: Tips for the Journey

### The Jesus Prayer

- Throughout 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 know.
- The importance of secrecy is that it ensures 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

## Centering Prayer

- Choose a word e.g., 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 your mind with thoughts of “Jesus,” or “love,” or “peace.”
- The goal is not to create a spiritual experience, but to simply rest in and enjoy the presence of God.



# “Intellectuals”

## Loving God with the Mind

### Contours: Mapping This Land

- When the intellectual’s minds are awakened, when they understand something new about God or his ways, then their adoration is unleashed.
- If they are not learning new things about God their relationship with Him feels stagnant.
- Intellectual pursuit plays 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.

### Roadkill: Running Off the Road

Intellectuals need to be aware of these dangers:

#### 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.

### **Pointers: Tips for the Journey**

- Consider getting a Master's degree 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 biblical book a year for in-depth study.
- Many courses are available through digital formats.
- What are the five basic building blocks for a Christian mind? Church history, biblical studies, systematic theology, ethics, and apologetics.

# Your Sacred Pathway Inventory

Score these statements on a scale of one to five, with one being not true at all for you and five being very true for you. Record your answer in the box provided. Hint: try to avoid scoring a statement with a three—push yourself to either a two or a four 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 worshipping 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</i> , <i>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 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 worshipping 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 worshipping 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, of 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.
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 Sacred Pathway Inventory Response Sheet

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

Naturalists		4	18	31	36	42	49
Sensates		9	17	22	32	39	52
Traditionalists		2	16	19	35	43	54
Ascetics		5	15	23	27	37	47
Activists		6	14	20	33	44	53
Caregivers		1	13	24	28	38	48
Enthusiasts		7	12	25	29	41	50
Contemplative		8	11	26	34	45	51
Intellectuals		3	10	21	30	40	46

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	

Any score of fifteen or higher indicates a preference or tendency for this spiritual temperament.

Reflect on the cluster of temperaments you prefer. What





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