

Discover Ways to Connect with God: The 9 Sacred Pathways

As followers of Jesus, we know how important it is to connect with God and feed ourselves spiritually. The most common way we hear about doing this is by spending intentional time reading God's Word and meditating on it. While this is a great way to invest in your relationship with God, it isn't the only way! This isn't surprising since God made us all unique, and there isn't a one-size-fits-all when it comes to how we worship and engage with Jesus.

Gary Thomas (author of [Sacred Pathways](#)), describes nine spiritual temperaments that you can explore to find ways you uniquely express yourself in your relationship with God. Below you'll find descriptions of the temperaments and suggested ways to engage them and worship. There are three steps to this process:

1. Take one of the spiritual temperament tests below (click underlined title).
 - o [ONLINE version](#) (choose "Personal Assessment")
 - o [PRINTED version](#)
2. Read about your spiritual temperament(s) below.
3. Try some of the practices and activities for your style!

Below each description are some spiritual practices and worship activities that fit naturally with each spiritual temperament. You can click on any [underlined title](#) for more resources! The practices and activities you can try are NOT limited to the ones listed. Feel free to explore or create your own! If you would like information on practices or activities, have questions, or want to give feedback, we'd love to hear from you! You can email us here ... discipleship@rockbridge.cc

NATURALISTS: Loving God Outdoors

The Naturalist feels closest to God when they are literally out-of-doors and spending time surrounded by what God has made—the mountains, forests, or ocean. They'd often rather spend time by a stream or lake worshipping than studying. Seeing God's beauty in the outdoors is more moving to them than discovering new theological concepts or ideas. Suggested practices and activities:

- Worship as the dawn breaks
- Go for a walk while listening to worship music.

- Unplug from all technology for a few hours and connect with God.
- Read your Bible in nature and meditate on the beauty of God's creation.
- Prayerwalking
 - Slowly and deliberately walk through places for the purpose of intentional and listening prayer.
 - Walk through your neighborhood, a park, or your town, giving to God the people and activities that go on there.
 - Take a group of children or adults on a prayer walk and talk to them about what it is like for them.
 - Allow the visual nature of this journey to prompt prayers.
 - Become quiet and listen to God's prayer for a particular place.
 - More resources here → [Waymakers Prayerwalking](#)
- Practicing the Presence
 - Develop a rhythm of living that brings God to mind throughout the day wherever you are.
 - Intentionally recollect yourself before God as you engage in the activities and duties of your life.
 - Seek to see others through the eyes of God.
 - Stop throughout the day to listen to God.
 - Remain open and teachable at all moments.
- Unplug
 - Unplug electronic devices that interrupt relationships.
 - Refrain from using email.
 - Devote time and attention to others without interruption.
 - Communicate face to face rather than virtually.
 - Settle into uninterrupted quiet with Jesus.
 - This leads to freedom from the compulsive and demanding nature of technological communication and its toll on the soul.

SENSATES: Loving God with the Senses

Sensates are brought to life by the use of their senses and love worshiping in environments where they can witness the beauty of architecture and engage in music. They are more drawn to museums and concerts than they would be to walking through woods or reading. When we embrace the use of the senses—which God created—we open up new avenues of worship. Sensates see God in beauty, are artistic, and enjoy God's creation. Suggested practices and activities:

- Sing scripture or absorb worship-producing art.
- Enter into a scripture passage. Be one of the characters. Experience the passage.
- Create a worship space for yourself: light a candle and/or set out meaningful articles (i.e. a cross).
- Journal or draw as you pray to let the beauty of your connection with God come out on the paper.

- Find beautiful places to worship, whether it's in a church building with beautiful stained glass, a museum, or an art exhibit.
- Pray with your whole body. Align yourself in different postures like kneeling, standing, or laying down. See how your posture changes how you pray.
- Celebration is a way of engaging in actions that orient the spirit toward worship, praise, and thanksgiving. This includes:
 - Pursuing activities that bring the heart deep gladness and reveling in them before the Lord, such as spending time with others, sharing meals, working, serving, worshiping, listening to music, and dancing.
 - Enjoying every good and perfect gift as coming from God.
 - Cultivating a spirit of gladness.
 - Taking yourself less seriously.
 - Having holiday traditions that guide your celebration.
 - Seeking out church worship and social events.
- Praying in color includes:
 - Getting prayerfully creative and using doodles, color, words, and pictures as a way of expressing what is in your heart and seeking connection with God.
 - It is a visual, concrete, and lasting way to pray.
 - It is useful if there are no words for prayer.
 - More resources found here → [Praying In Color](#)

TRADITIONALISTS: Loving God through Ritual and Symbol

For the Traditionalist, feeling close to God means harking on a familiar form of worship that ties to their childhood or past memories. Tradition and history hold a lot of meaning, and they're often drawn to physical examples of symbols that they can place in areas that will serve as reminders of their faith, like in a car, home, or office. They enjoy developing rituals for themselves for elements like prayer, worship, and reading the Bible. Suggested practices and activities:

- Set a regular time and place to meet with God each day.
- Memorize Bible verses and longer passages of Scripture.
- Read Scripture out loud and meditate on what you're reading.
- Try morning, midday, and evening readings and prayers. Here are two resources:
 - [Lectio 365](#)
 - [Daily Office Readings](#)
- Practice physically placing something on an altar to sacrifice it to God.
- Follow the [Church Calendar](#) and celebrate significant days (i.e. Pentecost, Lent, Advent)
- Liturgical prayer is a written or memorized prayer that serves as a framework for individual or corporate worship and devotion. This includes:
 - Praying prayers written by others.

- Praying or singing Scripture as a part of worship (i.e. the Lord's Prayer, psalms, responsive readings, and doxologies).
- Praying prayers of the church that have come to us from the past.
- Praying the Liturgy of the Hours.
- Praying prayers written for each season of the church year.
- Keeping company with Jesus through the prayers and writings of others.
- Check out the liturgies for daily life in [Every Moment Holy](#).
- Fixed-hour prayers call for regular and consistent patterns of attending to God throughout the day. This includes:
 - Interrupting work at set times for prayer.
 - Following the prayers in the Liturgy of the Hours.
 - Following a personal liturgy for prayer at set hours of the day.
 - Stopping at the top of every hour for prayer.
 - Keeping company with Jesus throughout the hours of the day.
 - Developing the ability to hear a word from God in the midst of daily activities.
 - Try the Divine Hours books by [Phyllis Tickle](#)
- Fasting is the self-denial of normal necessities to intentionally attend to God in prayer. The physical awareness of emptiness is a reminder to turn to Jesus who alone can satisfy. This includes:
 - Abstaining from food, drink, shopping, desserts, chocolate and so on to intentionally be with God.
 - Abstaining from media: TV, radio, music, email, cellphones, computer games to allow space for listening to the voice of Jesus.
 - Abstaining from habits or comforts in order to give God undivided attention.
 - Observing fast days and seasons of the church year.
 - Addressing excessive attachments or appetites and the entitlements behind them, and partnering with God for changed habits.
 - Repenting and waiting on God.
 - Seeking strength to persevere, obey and serve.
 - Overcoming addictions, compulsions, whims and cravings.
 - Keeping company with Jesus in relinquishment.

ASCETICS: Loving God in Solitude and Simplicity

The Ascetic enjoys being alone and focusing on their faith internally. They feel closest to God when there is nothing around to distract them from focusing on his presence. A person with the Ascetic temperament would enjoy taking a retreat by themselves to spend time alone to pray and study God's Word, and they're drawn to simplifying their life as much as possible. Indeed, believers who find that these elements awaken their souls to God's presence. Suggested practices and activities:

- Practice worshiping in silence, simplicity, and solitude.
- Unplug from technology and spend intentional time alone, seeking God.
- Worship in the quiet of the night. Rise in the early morning for prayer and worship.
- Silence is a regenerative practice of attending and listening to God in quiet, without interruption and noise. Silence provides freedom from speaking as well as from listening to words or music. This includes:
 - Setting a period of time in which you don't speak but isolate yourself from sounds.
 - Driving or commuting without the radio on.
 - Leaving the TV off to spend time in silence with God alone.
 - Exercising without attending to noise and listening to God.
 - Having personal retreats of silence.
- Simplicity uncomplicates and untangles your life so that you can focus on what really matters. This includes:
 - Assessing the things and activities that keep life convoluted, complicated, and confusing, working to simplify these things.
 - Setting priorities that flow from loving God above all else.
 - Downsizing possessions and eating simple foods.
 - Enjoying simple pleasures that require no expense.
 - Removing distractions and preoccupations with things.
- The practice of solitude involves scheduling enough uninterrupted time in a distraction free environment that you experience isolation and are alone with God. This includes:
 - Giving God time and space that is not in competition with social contact, noise, or stimulation.
 - Taking a retreat.
 - Observing Sabbath refreshment by abstaining from constant interaction with others, information, and activities.
 - Communing with God alone while you walk or run by yourself.
 - Practicing disciplines alone, such as study, prayer, journaling, and so forth.
- More resources found here → [The Ignatian Journey](#)

ACTIVISTS: Loving God through Confrontation

Activists love and feel closest to God by standing up for righteousness and justice. They'd rather stand in the rain for an hour to protest and bring an injustice to light than sit in a room by themselves for an hour and pray. Activists need to find the right balance, modeled by Christ who interspersed times of spiritual refreshment with intense ministry. Suggested practices and activities:

- Spend intentional time praying about the injustices you feel so passionate about. Give God your thoughts and ideas first!

- Consider God's faithfulness in the light of so much undone in the world. Consider His great patience. He is working even when we see no evidence of it. Don't give up!
- Justice seeks to help others through correcting and redressing wrongs. It treats others fairly and shows no favoritism. This includes:
 - Being responsible to God and others.
 - Being a good steward of what you own.
 - Supporting just causes with time, action, and financial support.
 - Treating others impartially and fairly.
 - Providing for the poor, needy, and oppressed through means available to you.
 - Volunteer at local faith-based or other non-profits giving your time and energy to those in need.
 - Refusing to buy products of companies that take advantage of the poor
- Prayerwalking to intercede for a specific area by walking through it. This includes:
 - Slowly and deliberately walk through places for the purpose of intentional and listening prayer.
 - Walking through housing projects and government facilities, in places of need, fear, conflict, and decision-making, blessing the rooms and praying for the activities and people that gather there.
 - Walking through your neighborhood, a park, your town giving to God the people and activities that go on there.
 - Taking a group of children or adults on a prayer walk, talking to them about what it is like for them.
 - Allowing the visual nature of this journey to prompt prayers.
 - Becoming quiet and listening to God's prayer for a particular place.
 - More resources found here → [Waymakers Prayerwalking](#)
- Intercessory prayer invites us into God's care and concern for us, our families, friends, neighbors, and the world. No concern is too trivial for God to receive with loving attention. Intercession is a way we become aware of God's prayer for a person and join in that intercession. This includes:
 - Going to prayer meetings.
 - Going on prayer walks.
 - Participating in healing prayer.
 - Praying for the world, for peace, and for God's kingdom to come.
 - Praying for personal concerns, tasks, transactions, and relationships.
 - Join or start a Prayer Team on your campus.
 - Pray for your church family as part of the pastoral care team on your campus.

Caregivers are motivated by service and compassion, and they feel closest to God when they see him in the needy, the poor, the sick, and the imprisoned. For caregivers, acts of mercy are a very practical way for them to show their love for God AND grow in their love for God. For caregivers, giving care isn't a chore but a form of worship. Suggested practices and activities:

- Serve at Rock Bridge and use your gift to care for others.
- Host a small group in your home or help lead a support group.
- Be open to studying the Bible and counseling others through tough times.
- Pray with intentionality for God to send you opportunities to help others, and be open to those opportunities when they come.
- Volunteer at local faith-based non-profits giving your time and energy to those in need.
- Service is a way of offering resources, time, treasure, influence and expertise for the care, protection, justice, and nurture of others. This includes:
 - Mentoring, gifts of mercy, and helping.
 - Using your influence to better the lives of others.
 - Using your gifts to build the kingdom of God.
 - Doing service projects.
 - Serving the homeless or working in a soup kitchen
 - "Adopting" and visiting a prisoner
 - Helping a friend through a personal crisis
 - Helping somebody battling substance abuse
 - Helping an illiterate person learn to read
 - Donating time at a women's shelter
 - Counseling at a pregnancy care center
 - Fixing somebody's car or repairing a house
 - Watching the children of some tired parents
 - Volunteer with a homeless ministry
- Hospitality creates a safe, open space where a friend or stranger can enter and experience the welcoming spirit of Christ in another. This includes:
 - Sharing your home, food, resources, car, and all that you call your own so that another might experience the reality of God's welcoming heart.
 - Reaching out to and receiving the stranger or enemy with the hope that he or she might be transformed into a friend.
 - Loving, not entertaining the guest.
 - Welcoming others into your clique, club, group, and life.
 - Spontaneously inviting others over for meals.
 - Reaching out beyond your nuclear family to include others.
 - Hosting exchange students.
- Mentoring means to accompany and encourage others to grow in their God-given potential. This includes:

- Guidance, encouragement, and modeling given by a more mature believer to a younger one.
- Training that equips another to better use their gifts.
- Building authentic relationships that provide support, encouragement and help in specific areas.
- Providing or receiving influence, instruction, training and perspective.

ENTHUSIASTS: Loving God with Mystery and Celebration

Enthusiasts search for celebration and joy in their worship, and are energized by genuine praise and seeing God work in supernatural ways. They understand that there are certain things about God 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. Hands-on experiences are especially exciting, and they're always ready for God to move in unexpected ways. Suggested practices and activities:

- Serve in the worship band if you're musically talented.
- Host celebrations for friends and family around faith decisions like following Jesus and getting baptized.
- Keep track of your dreams. Write down any that seem significant. The meanings should be fairly obvious to you. Talk with someone about them.
- Cultivate the mystery of expectancy: ask God to bring someone in your path to whom you can minister and/or start a conversation with a stranger.
- Use your imagination to put yourself into the scene when you are reading Bible passages. Try to understand how the participants were feeling, thinking, and acting.
- Use your imagination to consider how you might act on the teaching of the Scriptures, such as the Beatitudes, teachings about forgiveness, loving your enemies, etc.
- Celebration is a way of engaging in actions that orient the spirit toward worship, praise, and thanksgiving. This includes:
 - Pursuing activities that bring the heart deep gladness and reveling in them before the Lord including: spending time with others, sharing meals, working, serving, worshiping, laughing, listening to music, dancing.
 - Enjoying every good and perfect gift as coming from God.
 - Cultivating a spirit of gladness.
 - Taking yourself less seriously.
 - Having holiday traditions that guide your celebration.
 - Seek out church worship and social events.
- Conversational Prayer is talking naturally and unselfconsciously to God in group prayer times with others. This includes:
 - Attending prayer meetings.
 - Having short, vocal prayer in planned and unplanned venues.

- Praying spontaneously with others around specific topics as they come to mind.
- Worship happens whenever we intentionally cherish God and value him above all else in life. Worship reveals what is important to us. This includes:
 - Focusing on and responding to God with your whole being.
 - Offering my body as a “spiritual act of worship.”
 - Regularly engaging with a worshiping community.
 - Seeking first the kingdom of God, keeping secondary things second.

CONTEMPLATIVES: Loving God through Adoration

Contemplatives seek to perform the first work of adoring God and feel closest to Him when their emotions are awakened through him—when they feel his love or a tug at their heart, or are reminded that he wants to be close to them. Difficult times are when they feel far away from God because they think of Him as their close friend. Contemplatives live for the love of God, gaze upon the face of their Heavenly Father, and give themselves to God. Suggested practices and activities:

- Practice [the Daily Examen](#).
- Read your Bible and think of it as God’s love letter to you.
- Observe the sabbath and use it as a day of real rest and reflection.
- Practice meditative prayer: choose one word or piece of scripture to focus your entire prayer on.
- Practice secret acts of devotion – something you do for someone else without letting anyone else know about it.
- Worship without limitations, allowing yourself to dance, sing loudly, and raise your hands without worrying what anyone else will think
- Breath prayer is a form of contemplative prayer linked to the rhythms of breathing.
 - Repeating a short phrase or one sentence prayer that begins with a biblical name of God that is meaningful to you.
 - Follow the name with a word or a phrase expressing your deep God-given desire.
 - Connect the prayer to your breathing and return to it throughout the day until it becomes a soul reflex.
 - Try saying a traditional breath prayer known as the Jesus Prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me.”
 - Breath prayers can also include phrases of Scripture: for example, “My soul glorifies the Lord” (Luke 1:46) and “My soul finds rest in God alone” (Psalm 62:1). Breath prayers can also be short prayers of love and desire, such as, “Shepherd, lead me by still waters” or “Come Holy Spirit, come.”
- Try reading Scripture in a more contemplative way, such as [Lectio Divina](#).

INTELLECTUALS: Loving God with the Mind

The Intellectual feels closest to God when they are learning something new about him and their mind is stimulated by him. They enjoy understanding their faith, not just focusing on what they feel as a result of it. Intellectuals enjoy uninterrupted study and teaching a group afterwards. Intellectuals remind us of the high calling of loving God with our mind. Suggested practices and activities:

- Study Christian ethics. [HERE](#) is a great book to start with!
- Memorize Scripture, hymns, poetry, and quotes that remind you of your faith.
- Use Bible reading plans to dive deeper into the Word and understand it better.
- Study theology in more depth, whether it's a course, a class, or pursuing a degree.
- Bible study involves engaging the mind and focusing attention on Scripture in an attempt to understand and apply truth to every part of my life. This includes:
 - Attend to biblical instruction with an open mind and heart in order to grow in love and understanding of the truth.
 - Systematically studying Scripture to gain the big picture of what God is doing on planet earth.
 - Using study guides, manuscript studies, and small group Bible studies.
 - Try using our [H.E.A.R. Bible Study Method](#) and/or watching our [How to Study the Bible](#) video.
- Memorization is the process of continually remembering the words, truths, and images God uses to shape us. Memorization provides us with a store of learning, which can be accessed anywhere and anytime. This includes:
 - Memorizing Scripture, hymns, poems, quotes, etc.
 - Rereading portions of Scripture until they are committed to memory.
 - Memorizing Scripture verses that clearly reveal God's plan of salvation.
 - Memorizing books of the Bible, particular dates and times, as well as where various verses are found.
 - Learning by heart portions of Scripture that encourage you when you are tempted.

If you want to explore Sacred Pathways further, check out this [Study Guide](#) or grab the book [Sacred Pathways: Discover Your Soul's Path to God](#). If you would like information about other practices/activities, have questions, or would like to give us feedback on how this worked for you, we'd love to hear from you! You can email us here ... discipleship@rockbridge.cc

