

Way of Discipleship Small Groups

Prayer 3: Praying as only I can: Connecting with God Survey



N.B. It will be helpful if the leader has already done the survey. You will need copies of it for everyone.

Touching base (5 minutes)

Open in prayer as is helpful for your group.

If this is your first session take time to introduce yourselves and set any ground rules you want to for your time together.

If you met previously take the opportunity either as a group or in pairs to check in with each other about how your response from last time has gone.



Introducing and using the survey (50 minutes)

Share that the aim of our time is to explore the best way of praying for each of us.

Give everyone a copy of the survey. Read the first page together.

Ask people to score themselves on the 36 questions - a time limit to do this will be useful.

On page 7 they can now work out what are the most natural way(s) for them to pray/connect with God.

Ask them to look at their description on pages 8-10.

Get them to share with the group or one or two others how they react.

Is there anything that they might find helpful in praying from the list of suggestions?

Responding to God's leading (5 minutes)

Give people an opportunity to think about, "What might God be showing me and how might I respond?" They may like to write this down and/or share it with the group and/or share it with one other person. A friendly question is to ask each other, "Is there anything that would be helpful to ask you next time?"



Group prayer (5 minutes)

You might like to use these words from Psalm 139, which celebrate how much God knows how we tick:



You have searched me, Lord,
and you know me.
You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.
You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.
Before a word is on my tongue
you, Lord, know it completely.
You hem me in behind and before,
and you lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too lofty for me to attain.
Amen.

Alternatively, if you have discovered a particular way in which most of your group connect with God, you might like to pray in that way.

CONNECTING WITH GOD IN PRAYER SURVEY

There are certain ways in which we might find it easier to connect with God because of our particular personality and spiritual background.

This survey, based on a book which outlines nine types of “sacred pathway” helps you understand how your experience of God might grow.

We all love and connect to God in different ways. God created us all with a certain personalities and spiritual temperaments, which make us gravitate towards certain types of practices and prayers.

God wants us to feel free to worship, according to the way he made us. A sacred pathway describes the way we relate to God, how we draw near to Him.

We can identify our sacred pathway and use practices which come naturally to that pathway as an easier way of connecting to God. We do not necessarily have to have just one pathway, most of us, however, will naturally have a certain leaning in the way we relate to God, which is our predominant spiritual temperament.

The purpose of this is not to put you “in a box”, but to explore some new possibilities, help you realize that not everything helps in equal ways, and appreciate the differences in experience of other people.



USE THE RATING SCALE BELOW TO RESPOND TO EACH QUESTION OR STATEMENT ACCORDING TO WHAT IS TRUE OF YOU (AS OPPOSED TO WHAT YOU WISH WAS TRUE), PUTTING THE APPROPRIATE NUMBER IN THE BLANK SPACE.

- 3: Definitely True of Me
- 2: True of Me
- 1: Somewhat True of Me
- 0: Not True of Me

I feel closest to God when...

- 1. I am in the beauty of nature. _____
- 2. I am singing praise songs to God. _____
- 3. I learn something new about God or life with him. _____
- 4. I practise spiritual traditions from my family or church. _____
- 5. I deny myself normal pleasures in order to pray. _____
- 6. I can see, hear, or touch God in some way. _____
- 7. I'm caring for someone who is hurting. _____
- 8. I'm joining with others to defend the cause of the poor and needy. _____
- 9. I am quiet and alone, focused only on God's presence. _____



To be spiritually renewed I need to...

10. Spend time outside enjoying God's creation. -----
11. Celebrate God and his love with music and songs of worship. -----
12. Read the Bible and think deeply about what God is saying. -----
13. Reconnect with the history, liturgy, or symbols of my spiritual tradition. -----
14. Fast from food or media or simplify my life in some other way. -----
15. Experience God in a tangible way (e.g., receiving communion, kneeling by a cross, lighting a candle, or appreciating spiritual architecture). -----
16. Feel his compassion flow through me to another person (e.g., when listening, encouraging, or praying). -----
17. Be part of a cause to promote the care of those who are less fortunate than me. -----
18. Silently contemplate God's love. -----

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

19. Appreciating the wonders God has created. -----
20. Offering enthusiastic expressions of thanks and praise to God. -----
21. Studying the Bible thoughtfully. -----
22. Using a Christian calendar or daily Bible readings and prayers provided by my church. -----
23. Keeping my life simple and uncluttered. -----
24. Imagining myself in a Gospel story, work of religious art, or spiritual film. -----
25. Supporting a friend who is going through a hard time. -----
26. Helping a sick neighbour, providing food for the hungry, or ministering to the elderly, abused, or imprisoned. -----
27. Meditating on Scripture or a devotional book that draws me into deeper intimacy with God. -----



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

- 28. Appreciate God’s beauty and the wonders of his creation. -----
- 29. Give joyful thanks and praise to God! -----
- 30. Teach me new insights about my life with God. -----
- 31. Remember the stories and practices of Bible heroes and saints from the past. -----
- 32. Be disciplined to make more space in my life and my soul for God. -----
- 33. Experience the “touch” of God’s presence on me. -----
- 34. Become more effective in caring for people who are struggling. -----
- 35. Stand up for justice and make an impact for the disenfranchised. -----
- 36. Love God all the time in the secret place of my heart. -----

There are four categories of nine statements in this survey. Each of the numbered statements corresponds to one of the nine Sacred Pathways.

Add up the point values for each of the Sacred Pathways and enter the sum in the table below (should be 0 to 12). Then rank each Sacred Pathway from 1 to 9, with 1 being your most preferred path.



Sacred pathway	Description	Questions	Total points	Rank
Naturalist	Appreciating the beauty of God's creation	1.10.19,28		
Sensate	Experiencing God with your physical senses or imagination	6.15.24.33		
Traditionalist	Following time-honoured spiritual traditions and practices.	4.13.22.31		
Ascetic	Abstaining from comforts to make more space for God	5.14.23.32		
Activist	Actively engaging with others to serve the poor and needy.	8.17.26.35		
Caregiver	Offering God's compassion to the hurting or struggling.	7.16.25.34		
Enthusiast	Celebrating God's goodness with thanks and praise.	2.11.20.29		
Contemplative	Being absorbed in God in quiet solitude.	9.18.27.36		
Intellectual	Gaining insights about God and life with Him.	3.12.21.30		

This survey shows the ways you are best able to connect with God and those that are hardest for you. All the pathways are good and helpful, but each has limitations.

It's helpful (and hopefully liberating) to know your strongest and weakest. In your day to day discipleship it will be good to practise those things that help you connect most regularly with God, and in times of stress, or when you feel far from God, to emphasize those practices that come most naturally.

In order to grow in maturity in Christ it is also good to learn from and appreciate the pathways that are more difficult for you, but which others might find fruitful.

**NATURALISTS:
APPRECIATING
THE BEAUTY
OF GOD'S
CREATION**

The naturalist sees out of doors as God's cathedral. Getting out can feed the soul - helping them to see God, understand the Bible better, and rest.

Good practices:

Taking a prayer walk - walking slowly through places for the purpose of intentional and listening prayer. Or walking through your neighbourhood giving to God the people and activities that go on there. Letting what you see prompt prayers. Taking others with you. Being quiet and listening to God in a particular place. Practising God's presence in daily life - finding ways to bring God to mind wherever you are. Finding moments in the day to stop. Unplugging from digital life. Turning off phones, emails, and so having uninterrupted time with others and with God.

**SENSATES:
EXPERIENCING
GOD WITH YOUR
PHYSICAL
SENSES OR
IMAGINATION.**

The sensate is touched spiritually through the five senses: taste, touch, smell, sound, and sight. They experience God through visible, touchable symbols. They see God in beauty, are creative and artistic and enjoy God's creation.

Good Practices:

Celebrating things that make the heart glad before God: spending time with others, sharing meals, working, serving, worshiping, laughing, listening to music, dancing. Taking ourselves less seriously. Having holiday traditions. Joining in with others in social events. Being creative with colour, words, pictures as a way of expressing prayer. Sharing in Holy Communion.

**TRADITIONALISTS:
FOLLOWING TIME-
HONOURED
SPIRITUAL
TRADITIONS AND
PRACTICES.**

The traditionalist appreciates ritual as a way to use the physical world to embody spiritual truths, through, for example, liturgical patterns or symbolic acts. These acts bring a sense of order in which they connect with God.

Good Practices

Using written or memorized prayers, praying or singing Scripture, praying daily prayers, using the prayers written for each season of the church year, using the prayers of others. Having set times for prayers. Fasting - self-denying of normal necessities to open up space for God - the hunger or emptiness reminds us of our need for God. Abstaining from food, or drink, or particular foods, or media, or regular comforts, seeking to overcome addictions.

**ASCETICS:
ABSTAINING
FROM COMFORTS
TO MAKE MORE
SPACE FOR GOD.**

The ascetic enjoys being on their own, simplicity, regular commitments, experiencing God away from "worldly" distractions.

Good Practices

Being silent before God by creating specific times when you are free from listening to words or music, and from speaking. This enables you to be aware of God and to listen to Him. Practising solitude by having uninterrupted time in a distraction-free environment in which you experience you are alone with God. Giving God time and space that is not in competition with social contact, noise or stimulation. Taking a retreat. Finding a place free from constant interaction with others, information and activities. Embracing simplicity by assessing what things and activities you really need and simplifying priorities. It may involve trying to empty your diary, eating more simply, enjoying things that don't cost money.

**ACTIVISTS:
ACTIVELY
ENGAGING
WITH OTHERS
TO SERVE THE
POOR AND
NEEDY.**

The activist expresses love for God by standing up for righteousness and justice, finding a balance, like Jesus, of times of intense action with refreshment. They confront evil, stand up for the truth, embrace risk, and look for God to act in miraculous ways.

Good Practices

Seeking justice by redressing wrongs, stewarding what you own, supporting good causes and providing for those in need. Volunteering at ministries within and without the church. Being careful about spending and buying in ways that don't exploit others. Prayer walking - praying for an area alone or with others as you walk, listening for what God is doing. Regular prayer for others (intercession). Joining in with prayer meetings, praying for healing.

The caregiver shows love for God in a very practical way through acts of kindness, but also grows in love for God through these acts. They may hear God more clearly when caring for someone than when they sit quietly in prayer. Giving care isn't a duty but a form of worship.

Good Practices

Serving others through offering time, resources and influence. They may do this through project-based work, mentoring, corresponding, sponsoring others, lending or giving money, offering persistent care through a crisis, practical support. Offering hospitality by creating a safe, open space for others where they can receive the welcome of Christ. Reaching out beyond family and friends to include others, giving hospitality to those who cannot repay it. Giving a home to those in need. Mentoring others by accompanying them in their discipleship, modelling the life of faith, hosting or leading discipleship groups.

**ENTHUSIASTS:
CELEBRATING
GOD'S GOODNESS
WITH THANKS AND
PRAISE.**

The enthusiast enjoys passionate and celebratory forms of worship, know there is always more than we can see, and are particularly open to the supernatural action of God.

Good Practices

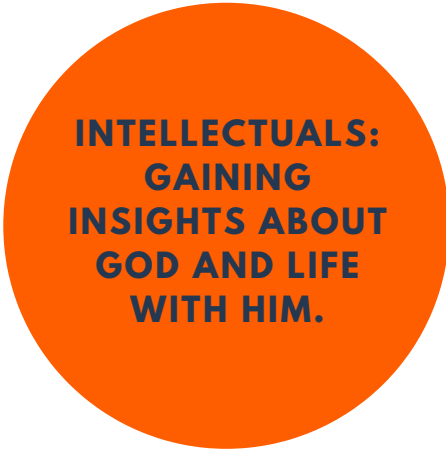
Celebrating God's goodness by spending time with others, sharing meals, working, serving, worshipping through song, laughing, listening to music, dancing. Talking naturally and un-self consciously to God in group prayer times with others. Praying spontaneously with others.

**CONTEMPLATIVES:
BEING ABSORBED
WITH GOD IN
QUIET SOLITUDE.**

The contemplative seeks intimacy with God. While some seek to serve the Lord, others seek to celebrate him, and still others seek to explain him, the contemplative seeks to gaze lovingly into God's face and be caught up in the rapture of a lover's experience. Contemplatives live for the love of God.

Good Practices

Breathing Prayer - Repeating a simple one-sentence prayer as you breathe, such as the Jesus Prayer or a sentence of Scripture. Centering prayer - seeking to quiet scattered thoughts and desires by focussing on Christ's presence. Solitude - see above.



**INTELLECTUALS:
GAINING
INSIGHTS ABOUT
GOD AND LIFE
WITH HIM.**

The intellectual connects with God by “loving God with the mind” - having their mind stimulated with Scriptures and other reading materials. They love to be challenged - if they are not learning new things about God then their relationship with him feels stagnant.

Good Practices

Bible study - focusing attention on Scripture in an attempt to understand and apply truth to every part of life. Using systematic approaches such as study guides, commentaries, listening to sermons, reading books. Memorization of parts of Scripture, hymns, poems, particularly those Scriptures that are encouraging in difficulty or temptation. Witnessing to faith by actively explaining and sharing with others.

(Adapted from a resource from Grace Church, Kansas City).