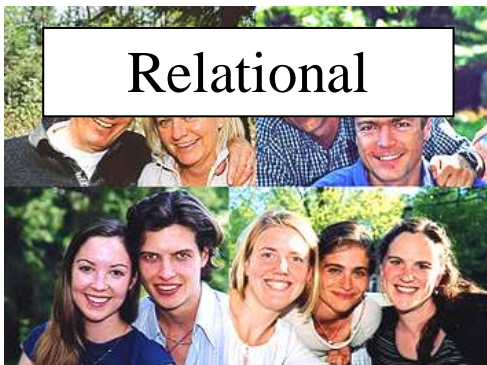


Finding Your
**Devotional
Pathway!**

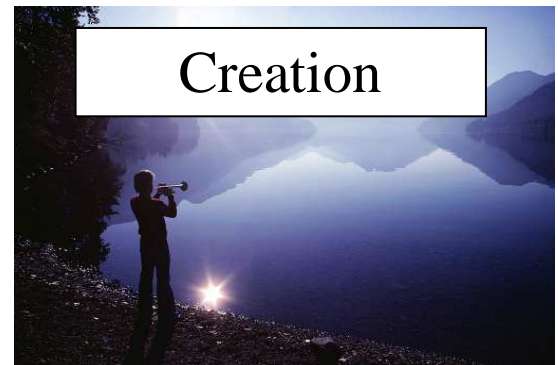
My 'Love Language' Towards God



Relational



Contemplative



Creation



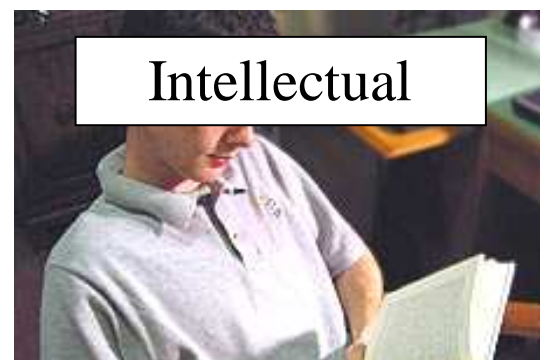
Worship



Activist



Serving



Intellectual

October 1st 2006

Roger Spackman

Te Atatu Baptist Church

📁 Finding Your Devotional Pathway.DOC

Adapted From / Credit Given to:

Exploring The Devotional Pathways
Gordon Miller
World Vision Leadership Letter
Issue 174. November /December 2002

Have you ever noticed that people relate to God *in different ways*?

One person might feel closest to God when they are sitting looking at the ocean.

But this might completely bore another Christian!

Instead, they feel most connected to God, and most complete within themselves, when they are *helping people* in other *practical* ways.

One person might feel God's presence through studying the Bible and praying in a quiet place.

But for another person, this is just an invitation to sleep!

That's why it's been said more than once, that 'quiet times are simply a case of *mind over mattress!*'.

Just like people have very different personalities and giftings,

...just as we all have a different 'love language' where we interact and relate *to each other*.

So does each and every one of us have a different way that we 'relate' to God – our Spiritual Love Language towards God!

In fact - there are well over seven different and unique ways that each of us can relate to God!

Today, this Bible study will transform many of our hearts and minds.

This message has the power to set many of us free, and discover the REAL way that God has *wired us up*, to worship and relate to Him.

Because - in spirituality, one size DOES NOT fit all!

Let's have a look at these seven pathways, and see which one 'fits' you best this morning.

They are:

1. The Relational Pathway
2. The Intellectual Pathway
3. The Serving Pathway
4. The Contemplative Pathway
5. The Activist Pathway
6. The Creation Pathway
7. The Worship Pathway

While most of us will have just one pathway, many of us will be able to identify with *some of the others* as well.

For each Devotional Pathway, we will look at:

- A relevant Scripture verse
- Explanation of the pathway
- Application of the pathway
- Relevance of this pathway in my life/how I score

So, let's take a look at our first one, the Relational Pathway to God.

1. The Relational Pathway

Someone with a relational pathway to God would have the 'one another' verses underlined in their Bible! Such as:



Scripture Verse

Hebrews 10:25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Explanation

Many people who start following Jesus - find *devotions* (reading Scripture, praying and thinking about God) on their own very hard work!

No matter how much they try, how focused they are or what method they use,

...they always end up with the same result – *private* and *personal* devotions bore them!

They don't meet Christ in their 'quiet time', and they go away feeling disappointed with God and themselves.

Get started on meeting together on a fairly regular basis, and, when that's working well, experiment with your own devotions till you find something reasonably effective.

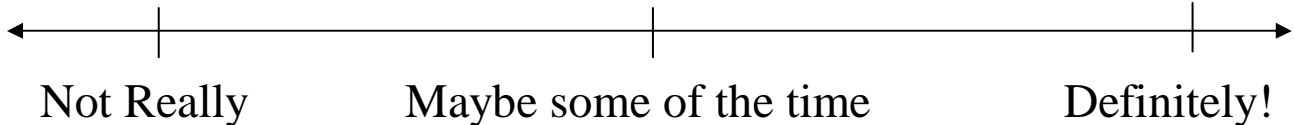
Your own devotions may never be brilliant, but they'll be much better than they've been, because inspiration from their group devotions will lift your private devotions to a new level.

As far as I can tell, people with bright, bubbly, out-going personalities are particularly attracted to the relational pathway,

...just as intellectual and contemplative pathway people don't usually incline to this pathway at all!

Relational Pathway To God

Is this how I relate to God and find fulfillment in my life towards Him?



2. The Intellectual Pathway

Somebody who relates to God through their intellect will probably have 2nd Timothy 2:15 underlined in their Bible!



Scripture Verse

KJV Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

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 || *Explanation* ||
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People with an Intellectual Pathway to God probably also have a degree or two in theology hanging upon their office wall as well!

You see, some people get closest to God when they do their Bible reading or Quiet Time with *Study Bibles* and *Bible commentaries*,

...because they love wrestling with profound issues and difficult questions - and breakthroughs bring them very close to God.

These people hardly ever get excited at services that focus on people's stories and testimonies - because they're looking for something that stimulates *their minds*.

Without that stimulation they're restless and unfulfilled, because their hearts and wills are never moved until their *minds* are challenged by truth.

But once their minds are convinced about something, they can have an extraordinary influence for good and find a deep passion for Christ!.

They come to God by the intellectual pathway.

Paul, trained by the top teacher of the day (Ac 22.3) and with his huge emphasis on the mind (Ro 12.2 etc), came to God by this route - and he reshaped the religious world of his day.

Martin Luther, who rediscovered justification by faith, and John Calvin with his teaching on the sovereignty of God, both probably came to God by the intellectual pathway.

So just as relational pathway people need to develop ways in which they can get closer to God,

...intellectual pathway people should do the same - but their pathways will be very different.

Application

If you are this type of person, you may well find yourself studying the Scriptures, ancient texts and even the original Biblical languages in order to bring you closer to God!

In your 'devotional times', arm yourself with a pencil and pad.

Get yourself with the best study materials and books you can buy.

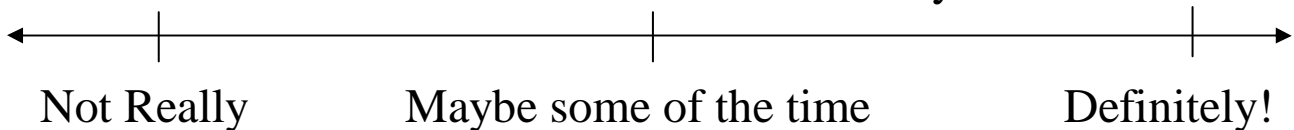
No doubt the Bible you bought with you today will be a NIV Study Bible or something similar.

Buy yourself several Bible commentaries, and even theological dictionaries such as Millard Erickson's *Christian Theology*.

You don't need to get all these books at once; but if you can get some tools to help you with your devotional reading and thinking, you too will find a 'freedom and liberty' like never before!

Intellectual Pathway To God

Is this how I relate to God and find fulfillment in my life towards Him?



3. The Serving Pathway

Someone who has a devotional pathway of *servicing*, will probably have this verse underlined in their Bible:



Scripture Verse

Colossians 3:23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, 24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

Explanation

Those people with a Serving Pathway, get closest to God when they're *helping others* do the work of the Kingdom.

You can always tell who these people are because when you ask them when they feel closest to God they'll say it's *when they're serving*,

...not when they're praying or singing or doing other "religious" things, which they may also enjoy up to a point.

I've heard of a man who took early retirement and shifted to just across the street from a church so he could spend several days a week doing voluntary work around the church - because he feels closest to God *when he's serving*.

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Some people get closest to God when they spend long periods of time on their own with him,

...enjoying his presence, meditating on his goodness, thinking through great issues like suffering and the cry of the poor,

...writing songs that bless us, poems that challenge us, and books that stretch us.

They come to God by the contemplative pathway.

They love being *alone* with God for long periods, and they tend to steer away from relational activities because people and activities drain them.

Contemplatives live for their relationship with God: they are happiest when they gaze into his face and worship him with holy passion.

Contemplatives may not be as large a group as some of the other groups, but they've exerted an extraordinary influence on the Church through the ages.

Augustine had a contemplative side - as did Thomas Aquinas, the great thinker of the High Middle Ages.

Indeed Aquinas said that; 'we know the bliss of contemplation in direct proportion to our withdrawal from the world, and *that* desire is the most important thing in the contemplative life.'

However, contemplation is easier for some than for others.

Application

Do you get closest to God when you're enjoying his presence on your own?

When you talk about your relationship with him, do you always focus on loving him, being his friend and adoring him more than anything else?

Do you want everyone else to have a 'personal relationship' with God as a loving Father?

If you do, the contemplative pathway probably suits you best, so get started on this pathway and learn from some of the writers I've mentioned.

Then you too will grow and flourish in your walk with Christ.

But a caution for those of us who do NOT have a contemplative pathway. *Don't try to pressure these types of people into a more active, service-focused faith.*

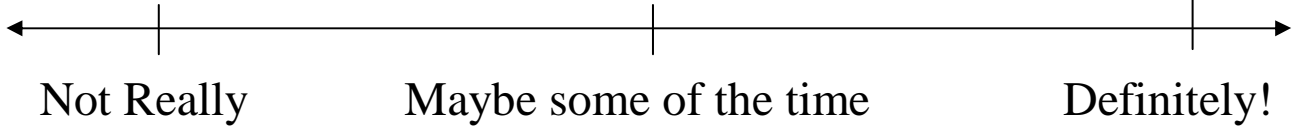
They're reflective thinkers more than servers, worshippers more than activists.

Let them exercise their God-given ministry and devotional pathway of introspection and contemplation.

And a word of caution for those of us who are 'reflective contemplators', don't try to make others follow God like you do – you'll bore them to death!

Contemplative Pathway To God

Is this how I relate to God and find fulfillment in my life towards Him?



5. The Activist Pathway



A person with an Activist Devotional Pathway would possibly have 1st John 3:17 underlined in their Bible!

Scripture Verse

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?

Explanation

People with an Activist Pathway to God probably relate well to Peter, the 'activist' amongst the disciples of Jesus!

Mark 14:47 Then one of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

Some people feel closest to God when they're living at the edge of their potential!

Charging into battle to lead great causes and grow great churches or ministries,

...when the odds are overwhelmingly stacked against them and the only hope of victory is divine intervention.

Moses, Elijah and Habakkuk in the Bible probably came to God by this pathway. John Wesley leading the charge for spiritual renewal and social reform.

George Whitefield preaching himself into exhaustion from the day he was ordained.

D L Moody amazing his associates with how much he did – his colleagues often commenting that he did the work of three men by himself!

These men, and many others felt closest to God when they cried out in desperation "O God, save us!"

These most gifted activists are generals in God's army and gather round them armies of helpers who share their great dreams,

...living for the same cause and pouring themselves out with the same passion.

Activists get things done, and they get their passion for God, and from God – through activity and action!

So see if you incline to this pathway – ask yourself this question.

Do you get closest to God when you're fighting for justice, leading the charge to help the poor,

...writing letters to government and newspaper editors, and calling the Church to wake from its apathy and get on with winning the world for Christ?

If you do, you're probably an *activist pathway* person!

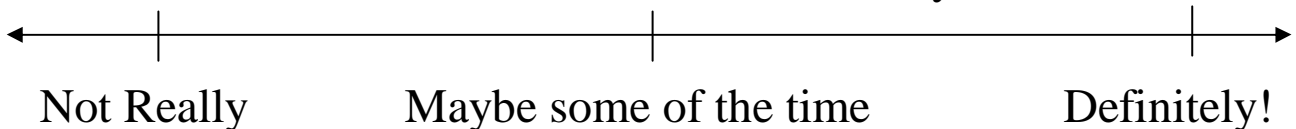


If your Devotional Pathway to God is as an Activist, develop appropriate devotions, which may include disciplines like journaling, to focus your energy.

But remember this: for all their passion, activists do sometimes fall into 'burn out' and depression through taking their activism too far, as Elijah did in the Bible.

Activist Pathway To God

Is this how I relate to God and find fulfillment in my life towards Him?



6. The Creation Pathway



Someone who has a devotion pathway of creation, will probably have Romans 1:20 underlined in their Bible:

Scripture Verse

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

Explanation

Some people feel closest to God when they get into the natural splendor of creation,

...praying outdoors, living where they can see great views, walking on tracks across great mountains and holidaying in the open spaces.

Put them "somewhere in creation" and God seems very close.

Tie them down to living and working in great cities without any respite and they dry up inside.

They're creation pathway people and need regular contact with creation to get close to God.

Many through the ages have been like them. Anthony (born 251ad) made famous by Athanasius' writings, said God's "book" was the

If you do, then very carefully develop a spiritual formation plan that builds in vast amounts of worship,

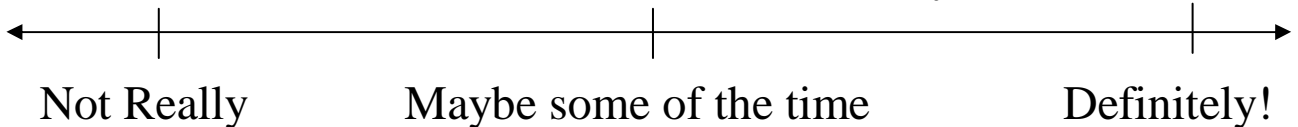
Buy all the worship CD's you can. Learn an instrument to help you in your personal worship of God.

Join the worship team and begin to influence and strengthen others too.

...because if you can get the worship your hearts long for, you too will find "freedom and liberty" and be very fruitful for Christ.

Worship Pathway To God

Is this how I relate to God and find fulfillment in my life towards Him?



Using The Devotional Pathways

Now some quick comments to help us find and use our pathways.

First, many of us have one primary pathway and elements of some of the others.

So someone who comes to God by the intellectual pathway may also have a contemplative tendency (the two sometimes go together),

...they might also be an activist when fired up about something, love being out in creation, and know moments of deep emotion when worshipping with others.

But their whole relationship with God grows out of their daily times of profound "intellectual" reflection on the Bible.

Although we may enjoy parts of all seven devotional styles, you will find you have just one pathway as your primary pathway to worshipping and enjoying God.

Second, when we've found our primary pathway, we should *lean into it* with all our might!

What a tragedy that we can live for years and years virtually cut off from the God we adore.

So if we're relational pathway people, let's fill our lives with the friendships and activities that bring us close to God.

Or if we come by other pathways, let's lean into them so we find the deeper walk with God to which He calls us.

Third, once we're established in our primary pathway, we should also experiment with other pathways.

They'll all help us grow to maturity in Christ.

So the serving pathway people will benefit from reading intellectually stimulating books and articles from time to time.

Activists can sit out in creation for a while or try the contemplative approach.

Contemplatives might try coming out of their seclusion and experiment being with the relational types -they'll love to have you!

To really grow, lean into your pathway but experiment with others so you grow to full maturity.

Fourth, if we're in leadership we should try to help everyone in our churches identify their pathway.

When we do, we give them a gift that will bless their walk with Christ to the end of their lives.

This study is simple tool to help the average Christian find their devotional pathway.

Study it more, as a leader, develop your own devotional pathway, and then lead others to do the same by your example.

So take an extra copy, and give it to all your friends and loved ones!

Give it to people and encourage them to lean into their pathway once they've found it.

Fifth, we should also remember that we have people from all the pathways in our service today.

So we, and our worship leaders, should remember this when we plan and lead our services.

Perhaps we're intellectual types with a contemplative streak, and our services reflect this.

But what about the worship pathway people who die inside if they can't get the worship they yearn for?

Or maybe we're full-on activist types who speak and lead with huge emotion and passion.

But do our services also provide for the contemplatives and intellectuals who crave moments of quiet and reflection, and messages that speak to the mind as well as the heart?

We try our best to provide variety and opportunities for each of us to express our worship to God in the way He has wired us up.

If you don't find fulfillment one week, come back the next – chances are that you'll find it then.

So, what devotional pathway are you?

- ❑ The Relational Pathway
- ❑ The Intellectual Pathway
- ❑ The Serving Pathway
- ❑ The Contemplative Pathway
- ❑ The Activist Pathway
- ❑ The Creation Pathway
- ❑ The Worship Pathway

Let's pray together!