

Walking With God as a Rural Pastor



**Celebrating and Understanding Faith In the Ways We
Personally Experience God in Life and Rural Ministry**



The Rural Church Pastors Network
www.ruralchurchpastorsnetwork.com

Welcome!!

We are delighted you have taken time to make an investment in your life and leadership. Twice a year the Rural Church Pastors Network creates events for rural pastors which focus on both relevant ministry matters and pastoral personal health and wellbeing. All events are designed by a team of seasoned and committed rural pastors who ensure each RCPN gathering offers a meaningful experience that is not only encouraging, but which can be used in your personal life and rural church setting.



This course's theme focuses on the Pastor's Heart... specifically how we uniquely connect with God and celebrate our faith in rural ministry. Through the times of sharing and reflection it is our prayer that you will better understand your unique relationship with God and learn how to better nurture a sense of intimacy with Him. Various resources and exercises will be explored for the purpose of equipping you to feed your soul as you commune with the Father.

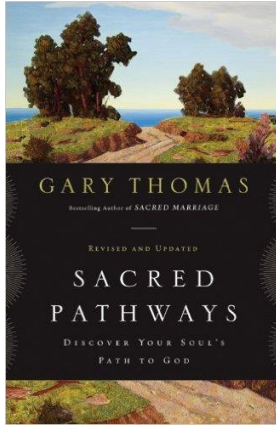


Our Goals for the Course

- ✓ To provide rural pastors with a 'day away experience' from your normal ministry location with the prayer you will be refreshed and renewed through our time together.
- ✓ To offer encouragement and support to pastors as they consider their current rural church ministry experience.
- ✓ Laughter and fellowship will permeate our gathering as we learn, eat and pray together.
- ✓ The belief there is a great deal we can learn from each other – whether mistakes or lessons.
- ✓ To encourage networking between pastors for continued contact and accountability.
- ✓ Take time to consider: As we gather today – what are your goals – why did you come – what are the needs of and burdens on your heart?
- ✓ Celebrating and Understanding Faith In the Ways we Personally Experience God in Life and Rural Ministry

Sacred Pathways ... Book Recommendation

Some Christians effortlessly spend hours in contemplative prayer. Just being around them makes you wish you were that way. Or maybe you are that way, but others are far better at showing God's love in practical ways or courageously standing up for God's kingdom. Why can't you be like them? Maybe you weren't designed to be.



In this revised and updated edition of Sacred Pathways, Gary Thomas strips away the frustration of a one-size-fits-all spirituality and guides you toward a path of worship that frees you to be you.

Experienced spiritual directors recognize that all of us pray differently; if your devotional times have hit a snag, perhaps it is because you're trying to follow someone else's path. This book

explodes the barriers that keep Christians locked into rigid methods of worship and praise.

Sacred Pathways unfolds nine distinct spiritual temperaments, their traits, strengths, and pitfalls. Illustrated with examples from the Bible and from the author's life experience, each one suggests an approach to loving God through a distinctive journey of adoration. In one or more you will see yourself and the ways you most naturally express your relationship with Jesus Christ.

You'll also discover other temperaments that are not necessarily "you" but that you may wish to explore for the way they can stretch and invigorate your spiritual life. Perhaps you are a Naturalist. Prayer and praise well up within you when you're walking a forest path or drinking in a mountain's jagged beauty. Or maybe you're an Activist. Taking a stand for God's ways is your meat and drink.

Whatever temperament or blend of temperaments best describes you, rest assured it's not by accident. It's by the design of a Creator who knew what he was doing when he made you according to his own unique intentions. If your spiritual walk is not what you'd like it to be, you can change that, starting here. Sacred Pathways will show you the route you were made to travel, marked by growth and filled with the riches of a close walk with God.





The Rural Church Pastors Network

Since its inception, the RCPN leadership team has prayerfully held this ministry with open hands before the Lord for His leading. It has been humbling to see over 200 rural pastors from four provinces and twenty denominations drawn to connect with a regional RCPN meeting over the past 4 years. We believe the RCPN will develop to its full potential as regional hubs are developed through local rural pastors accepting responsibility, twice a year, to call pastors together in their region and host an event... we currently meet in 9 venues in Alberta and Saskatchewan.



One of our Ministry Partners: **FOCUS ON THE FAMILY**

The RCPN wants to express thanks to our friends at Focus on the Family for their deep commitment to support and encourage pastors. Visit them at Focusonthefamily.ca for a full list of their resources. If you ever find yourself in crisis and in need of immediate help and assistance, please call their confidential call-in pastoral support line at 1.888.5.CLERGY

Visit The RCPN website at www.ruralchurchpastorsnetwork and take advantage of...

- ❖ Free audio files to download, offering insight and support related to the uniqueness of being a rural pastor.
- ❖ Follow the blogs of a rural pastors / leaders as they share life and ministry experiences
- ❖ Download previous RCPN event training resources to use at your church, local ministerial, or for personal support in your life and ministry. Resources, Book Reviews and more!
- ❖ Find information on the next event planned for your area in May 2016
- ❖ Let Us Know How We Can Pray for You!
- ❖ Offer stories, resources, rural related upcoming events or suggestions we can share
- ❖ Connect with us and other rural pastors on Facebook!
- ❖ Remember... We are just a 'click' away!



What's in your Spiritual Back pack?

When it comes to your spiritual journey let's consider and explore what you are carrying with you these days... fill in the questions below and share with those around your table.

1. There are many ways of describing your walk with God... If your spiritual journey was compared to the experience of climbing a mountain, based on the following descriptions, where are you in your spiritual life at the present time or how would you picture your spiritual life with God?

- a. forever getting ready to commence the journey
- b. taking baby steps
- c. making good progress
- d. establishing a base camp
- e. tired – climbing mountains is hard work
- f. surging to the summit
- g. on top of the world.
- h. over the hill – losing altitude!



2. What picture would depict your personal journey and relationship with God?

3. Where would you say you were a year ago? What has made the difference- Share your experience.

4. What burdens on your heart are currently weighing you down, and why?

5. What things are currently putting a skip in your step along the way. Why is that?

6. What would your spiritual journal read like from the past month?

7. What resources, disciplines or practices are you currently bring you ongoing sustenance?



Spiritual Pathway Assessment

In the beginning God created mankind in His image and, strange to say, God did not make any of us carbon copies of someone else. One of the wonders of creation is surely that God is a God of infinite variety and - in His grace - He has made us each unique, even as we conform to His image in us. It is this reality that suggests that we have permission to approach God in a way that fits who He made us to be – always, of course, within the confines of Biblical parameters such as reverence and sincerity and truth. And it is this premise which undergirds the subject we are going to explore in this RCPN event.

We do not all approach God in the same way. Indeed, there are *spiritual pathways* to which we may well feel a closer kinship than others. There are some ways of connecting with God that actually refresh us and invigorate us as we walk with Christ every day - and there are some ways of connecting with God that simply do not work despite our good intentions and our good efforts at making use of them. Our goal today is to remind us of some of the ways that have been identified for connecting with God. And it is our hope that all of us will leave our time together feeling a freedom to be who God created us to be because we recognize and affirm those *spiritual pathways* that actually flow out of who we are.

In recent years several authors have written on this subject. In his book **Spiritual Pathways** author Gary Thomas outlines and discusses nine ways that we connect with God. This book will be given to you today by the RCPN as an investment in you and your ministry. A number of years ago, John Ortberg and Ruth Haley Barton prepared a curriculum called **An Ordinary Day With Jesus** where - among other things - they deal with seven spiritual pathways that are commonly used to connect with God. Because we are using a diagnostic tool they have

developed, we will focus our attention on the seven spiritual pathways which they identify and explain. But first, let's take a few minutes to figure out where we fit into the picture.

The following survey is designed to reveal the manner in which you most naturally relate to God and express your faith in everyday life.

Respond to each statement below according to the following scale:

- 3 = Consistently/definitely true of me
- 2 = Often/usually true of me
- 1 = Once in a while/sometimes true of me
- 0 = Not at all/never true of me

Put the number in the blank before each of the 49 statements. Transfer the numbers you give for each assessment statement on to the final assessment page and total each column. The highest number identifies your preferred spiritual pathway; the next highest number, your secondary pathway, etc.

1. When I have a problem, I'd rather pray with people than pray alone.
2. In a church service, I most look forward to the teaching.
3. People who know me would describe me as enthusiastic during worship times.
4. No matter how tired I get, I usually come alive when a challenge is placed before me.
5. Spiritual reality sometimes feels more real to me than the physical world.
6. I get distracted in meetings or services if I notice details in the surroundings that haven't been attended to.
7. A beautiful sunset can give me a spiritual high that temporarily blocks out everything bothering me.
8. It makes me feel better about myself to hang out with people I know and like.
9. I've never understood why people don't love to study the Bible in depth.
10. God touches me every time I gather with other believers for praise.
11. People around me know how passionate I feel about the causes I'm involved in.
12. I experience a deep inner joy when I am in a quiet place, free from distractions.

13. Helping others is easy for me, even when I have problems
14. When faced with a difficult decision, I am drawn to walk in the woods, on the beach, or in some other outdoor setting.
15. When I am alone too much, I tend to lose energy or get a little depressed.
16. People seek me out when they need answers to biblical questions.
17. Even when I'm tired, I look forward to going to a church service.
18. I sense the presence of God most when I'm doing his work.
19. I don't understand how Christians can be so busy and still think they're hearing from God.
20. I love being able to serve behind the scenes, out of the spotlight.
21. I experience God in nature so powerfully I'm sometimes tempted not to bother with church.
22. I experience God most tangibly in fellowship with a few others.
23. When I need to be refreshed, a stimulating book is just the thing.
24. I am happiest when I praise God together with others.
25. "When the going gets tough, the tough get going" – that's true about me!
26. My family and friends sometimes tease me about being such a hermit.
27. People around me sometimes tell me they admire my compassion.
28. Things in nature often teach me valuable lessons about God.
29. I don't understand people who have a hard time revealing personal things about themselves.
30. Sometimes I spend too much time learning about an issue rather than dealing with it.
31. I don't think there's any good excuse for missing a worship time.
32. I get tremendous satisfaction from seeing people working together to achieve a goal.

33. When I face a difficulty, being alone feels most helpful.
34. Even when I'm tired, I find I have the energy and desire to care for people's problems.
35. God is so real when I'm in a beautiful, natural setting.
36. When I'm tired, there's nothing better than going out with friends to refresh me.
37. I worship best in response to theological truth clearly explained.
38. I like how all the world's problems – including mine – seem unimportant when I'm praising God at church.
39. I get frustrated with people's apathy in the face of injustice.
40. If the truth were told, I sometimes feel guilty for enjoying silence and solitude so much.
41. I am happiest when I find someone who really needs help and I step in and offer it.
42. Others know that if I'm not around, I'm most likely outside in a beautiful place.
43. People around me describe me as a people person.
44. I often read lots of books or articles to help me work through a problem.
45. When I get overwhelmed, there's nothing like a good worship service to get me back on track.
46. I should probably take more time to slow down, but I really love what I do, especially in ministry.
47. Sometimes I spend too much time mulling over negative things people say about me.
48. I experience God's presence as I counsel someone who is struggling or in trouble.
49. When I see natural beauty, something wonderful stirs in me that is difficult to describe.



Spiritual Pathway Assessment Scoring

Transfer the numbers from each answer to this grid, and total each column.
On the following page is a description of each pathway.

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.
15.	16.	17.	18.	19.	20.	21.
22.	23.	24.	25.	26.	27.	28.
29.	30.	31.	32.	33.	34.	35.
36.	37.	38.	39.	40.	41.	42.
43.	44.	45.	46.	47.	48.	49.
Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total
A	B	C	D	E	F	G

This assessment is found in John Ortberg and Ruth Haley Barton, *An Ordinary Day with Jesus: Participant's Guide* (Willow Creek Association, 2001), 67-72. Used with Permission.

Understanding Spiritual Pathways

A - Relational – I connect best to God when I am with others

B - Intellectual – I connect best to God when I learn.

C - Worship – I connect best to God when I worship.

D - Activist – I connect best to God when doing great things.

E - Contemplative – I connect best to God in silence.

F - Serving – I connect best to God while completing Kingdom tasks.

G - Creation – I connect best to God in nature.

The Seven Spiritual Pathway Descriptions

A - Relational – I connect best to God when I am with others

- * you grow spiritually when you are involved in significant relationships
- * your life is an ``open book`` and you are surprised when others find it difficult to be open
- * you do not like having to be alone
- * in key times of growth, God will often speak to you through people

Some cautions for this pathway ...

... guard against superficiality by developing some relationships which help you to go deep with others

... guard against becoming dependent on others and allowing your spiritual life to become merely a reflection of theirs – you do not want to be a spiritual chameleon.

B - Intellectual – I connect best to God when I learn.

- * you draw close to God as you are able to learn more about Him
- * the study of Scripture and theology is important to you
- * you are a thinker and have little patience with more emotional approaches to faith
- * in a church service the sermon is the ``main event`` for you
- * you hear God best when you are learning

Some cautions for this pathway ...

... guard against becoming all head and no heart

... don't confuse being smart with being spiritually mature.

The right gauge of spiritual health and maturity is love, not intelligence.

C - Worship – I connect best to God when I worship.

* You have a deep love for corporate praise and a natural inclination toward celebration

* In worship, your heart opens up and you feel fully alive and are able to participate freely

* When going through difficulties, worship is one of the most healing things you do

Some cautions for this pathway ...

... guard against judging others who are less expressive in worship

... guard against an experience-based spirituality that has you always looking for

the next worship 'high'. C.S. Lewis calls this, 'the fatal sin of saying "encore!"'

D - Activist – I connect best to God when doing great things.

* You have a single-minded zeal and a very strong sense of vision

* You have a passion to build the church and to work for justice

* Challenges don't discourage you. In fact, you LIKE challenges!

* You do all you can to bring out the potential God has placed in people

* You love a fast-paced, problem-filled, complex, strenuous way of life

Some cautions for this pathway ...

... be aware that you may run over or use people because you get so focused

on achieving a goal

... guard against going too long without pausing to reflect on what you are doing,

your motives, your spiritual condition and your emotional state.

In other words, take time to examine your inner world.

E - Contemplative – I connect best to God in silence.

- * You LOVE uninterrupted time alone. You NEED regular times of solitude.
- * Reflection comes naturally to you
- * You have a large capacity for prayer
- * If you get busy or spend a lot of time with people, you feel drained and yearn for solitude

Some cautions for this pathway ...

... guard against avoiding the demand of the real world because it doesn't live up to your ideals

... guard against retreating into your inner world when others disappoint you

... guard against the temptation to consider your times of private prayer and solitude as less important than the public acts of ministry performed by others

F - Serving – I connect best to God while completing Kingdom tasks.

- * God's presence seems most tangible to you when you are helping others
- * You are often uncomfortable in a setting where you don't have a role.
If you are allowed to contribute in some way, you sense God's presence and delight
- * You are constantly looking for acts of service you can engage in –
and you don't wait to be asked

Some cautions for this pathway ...

... guard against resenting others who don't serve as much as you do

... guard against confusing service with earning God's love

*Remember that God loves you because you are His CHILD
and not because you faithfully serve Him*

G - Creation – I connect best to God in nature.

- * You respond deeply to God through your experience of nature
- * Being outdoors replenishes you

* You are highly aware of your physical senses, and often art, or symbols,
or ritual will help you grow

* You tend to be creative

Some cautions for this pathway ...

... Guard against the temptation to use beauty or nature as an escape

*... Guard against the temptation to avoid church because you think that you can worship God
in nature, on your own. Even though people may sometimes disappoint you,
as a Christian you DO need the Body and ARE a part of it.*

Reflect...

Within the group today ... which spiritual pathways are represented?

Respond...

List your three highest scores related to the Pathway Assessment categories and in your own words describe your experience in light of the definitions provided:

1.

2.

3.

Consider and Share:

1. Were you surprised by any of your scores? If so, which one(s) and why?

2. Are there any pathways you wish came more naturally to you? If so, why is that?

3. How do your pathway strengths relate to expectations the church may have of you as pastor? Do they 'feel aligned' or to what extent are you conflicted in this area?

4. Over the years, how have your spiritual pathways changed and/or developed? What would you say is the reason for this?

You are made in the very image of God (Genesis 1)

You were fearfully and wonderfully made by God (Psalm 139)

You are God's workmanship (Ephesians 2)

In light of the spiritual pathway assessment results, and these biblical references, on the lines below write a prayer to God sharing your heart based on what you have learned about yourself and the God who made you!



RE-PACKING your Spiritual Back pack!

1. If you had the opportunity and ability to 're-pack' a spiritual backpack that would provide you with resources to help you on your way in the coming year, what would you include and why....

2. In relation to your spiritual walk with the Lord, where would you like to see yourself in a year's time?

3. What changes need to be made in your current practices, scheduling, priorities and/or commitments that will allow you to experience your heart's desire in this regard? (What do you have to eliminate from your current back pack!!?)

4. In light of your affirmations or discoveries related to the manner in which your best connect with God, who are the key stakeholders in your life you need to share with?

5. In reflecting upon your spiritual pathway ... which verses or scriptural passages have you found meaningful to breath life into your soul?





Spending a Day with Jesus

If you could plan to ‘spend a day with God’ in a meaningful devotional manner, describe what that experience would look like in as much detail as you can...

Where would you go...

What would you take with you...

What would you anticipate happening?

Upon reflection after your day is complete, what would you hope would sum up the day spent with Jesus!

Follow Up Discussion

What would the experience of sharing a day with God look like based on your spiritual pathway?

Resources designed to 'RE-Source' You!

The following books and resources are provided for support and encouragement in your spiritual journey in the days ahead. If you have other such resources we invite you to share them with us at tbeadle@transformcma.ca. We will compile your suggestions and list them on the RCPN website.

Books Suggested by Focus on the Family

A Guide to Prayer for Ministers and Other Servants - Reuben P Job/Norman Shawchuck
Adrenaline and Stress – Archibald D Hart
Celebration of Discipline - Richard Foster
The Contemplative Pastor – Eugene H Peterson
Devotional Classics – Richard Foster / James Bryan Smith
Emotionally Healthy Spirituality – Peter Scazzero
God is Closer Than You Think – John Ortberg
Hearing God – Dallas Willard
Invitation to a Journey – M. Robert Mulholland
Shaped by the Word – M. Robert Mulholland
Jesus Calling – Sarah Young
One Thousand Gifts – Ann Voskamp
The Reflective Life – Ken Gire
The Rest of God – Mark Buchanan
Spiritual Rhythm – Mark Buchanan
Sacred Rhythms – Ruth Haley Barton
The Sacred Way – Tony Jones
The Search for Freedom – Robert S McGee
The Search For Significance – Robert S McGee

Further Reading/Resources for each of the pathways.

General introduction to the subject

- * **Invitation to the Journey** - M. Robert Mulholland
- * **Windows of the Soul** – Ken Gire

Relational

- * **The Crisis of Caring** – Jerry Bridges
- * **Created For Community** – Stanley Grenz
- * **Life Together** – Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Intellectual

- * **The Christian Mind** – Harry Blamires
- * **Heart, Mind, Strength** – Sundar Krishnan
- * **Love Your God With All Your Mind** – J.P. Moreland

Worship

- * **Created to Worship** – Norman Jewell & Eva Gibson
- * **Learning to Worship as a Way of Life** – Graham Kendrick
- * **Worship Is a Verb** – Robert Webber
- * **Unceasing Worship** – Harold M. Best

Activist

- * **Books: God's Tools In the History of Salvation** – Klaus Bockmuehl
- * **Bad News For Modern Man** – Franky Schaeffer
- * **The Decline and Revival of the Social Gospel** – Paul Carter
- * **Radical** – David Platt
- * **Radical Together** – David Platt

Contemplative

- * **What Is Contemplation?** – Thomas Merton
- * **Thirsting For God: Spiritual Refreshment for the Sacred Journey** – Gary Thomas

Serving

- * **Conspiracy of Kindness** – Steve Sjogren
- * **Acts of Compassion** – Robert Wuthnow
- * **Mother Teresa: An Authorized Biography** – Kathryn Spink

Creation

- * **Christianity, Wilderness and Wildlife** – Susan Power Brattan

For Discussion

Share Books/Resources you have found helpful in your own Spiritual Walk (for the different Spiritual Pathway types that apply to you)



For I know the plans I have for you says the Lord, Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.

You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

Jeremiah 29:11-13



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