

ELEVATE: Worship – The Most Noble Thing

Session #3: How Do I Worship

Session Objective: Although singing and music can be a wonderful expression of worship, we also need to view worship with a wider lens. In this session, through a better understanding of Gary Thomas' spiritual temperaments, we will try to identify how each person can most naturally worship God.

Minimum Prep: Read through the entire session outline. Prepare an environment where discussion can occur.

- Prepare a Sacred Pathways Quiz and pencil for each student and leader.

Extended Prep:

- Obtain a copy of Gary Thomas' book Sacred Pathways to familiarize yourself with the concepts.

Session Outline

Leader Preamble: In the last two sessions we have focused on worship – what worship is and what happens when we worship. One major focus of worship is to express our love for God with our hearts, minds and entire being. Although singing and music can be a wonderful expression of worship, we also need to view worship with a wider lens. In this session on worship, we will try to identify how each of us can most naturally worship God.

Small Group Questions:

1. **Can you remember a time in your life when you really connected with God in a deep way? Can you recall a time when you were able to clearly sense God's presence and you were able to love God with your heart, mind and soul?**

Leader Note: If needed, be prepared to 'prime the pump' with an example from your own life.

2. **When you reflect on our answers to the last question, do you notice any similarities or differences?**

Leader Note: If your group is larger, you will have more variances. The objective of these first two questions is for students to share and then understand that people can connect with God in different ways. This foundation leads into the Sacred Pathways quiz.

Leader Say: In the next few minutes, we are going to take a quiz – but, there are no right and no wrong answers on the quiz. The idea behind the quiz is that each person has a spiritual temperament that helps them most naturally connect with God. The quiz has nine questions that may help you start to identify your spiritual temperament.

Distribute the quizzes and read through the instructions at the top of the page. Give students 5 minutes to complete the quiz and cross-reference their responses with the write-up that corresponds to their answer.

3. Were you able to identify your spiritual temperament or what is definitely not your spiritual temperament?

Leader Note: With each student's response, take a moment to paraphrase the description of that temperament.

4. What value does understanding your spiritual temperament have to your relationship with God and worshipping him?

Leader Note: Bring out the following points as needed:

- If that's your most natural way of connecting with God, we should focus on developing that aspect of our relationship with God more
- Now it makes sense why some people really connect with God in some settings and some people don't – it doesn't necessarily mean that some people are more spiritual than others, it may just be a difference of spiritual temperament.

5. What could some of the potential downfalls be to the concept of a spiritual temperament?

Leader Note: Bring out the following points as needed:

- You could begin to idolize the temperament rather than worshipping God
- You could disregard, avoid or devalue other temperaments thinking that God can't connect with you through that route – but it would be healthy to explore and experiment with different ways of worshipping God.

6. How does our understanding of spiritual temperaments help you relate to other followers of Christ? How does understanding spiritual temperaments help you better understand how worship is led in your local church?

- Can help us be less judgemental of others – i.e. when our temperament conflicts with someone else, we can see that it may be more about a difference in temperament than a difference in right and wrong.

7. Let's do some brainstorming about how we could better involve the different spiritual temperaments in our group meetings or in our church. What could be some ideas?
8. Let's do some brainstorming about how we can connect with God through our spiritual temperament on a daily basis. For example, how can you add the elements of a naturalist to your daily devotion time when you live in the city? Take a few minutes to go through the different temperaments in your group and do some brainstorming.

Pray – Lead your group in a time of prayer: **Thanking** God for the different ways of connecting with him. **Confessing** any judgements we have made on others when it may have been an issue of spiritual temperaments not right and wrong. **Asking** God to help us grow in our primary spiritual pathways and others too.

Finding Your Sacred Pathway

(based on **Sacred Pathways** by Gary Thomas)

Put a circle beside the 2 or 3 that most sound like you

Put an 'x' beside the 2-3 that sound least like you.

1. I feel closest to God when I'm surrounded by what He's made – the mountains, forests, water, etc.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. I feel closest to God when I am alone and there is nothing to distract me from focusing on His presence.
5. I feel closest to God when I'm co-operating with Him in standing up for His justice: writing letters to government, picketing, learning about current issues from a biblical viewpoint.
6. I am closest to God when I see Him and serve Him in the needy, the poor, the sick and the imprisoned.
7. 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.
8. When I think of God, I think of love, friendship and adoration more than anything else.
9. 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.

Check Your Responses – Match The Numbers

- 1. Naturalists** – Love connecting with God in the great outdoors and God’s great cathedral. From the Garden of Eden to Jesus speaking on the seashore, the Bible provides innumerable examples of God speaking through the backdrop of nature. Be careful of escapism, lack of objective truth and idolizing nature.
- 2. Sensates** – Love connecting with God through their senses. Sounds – from organs, bells, choirs, classical music, formal language to Smell – incense, candles, wine, etc. to Touch – nails, to Sight – altar, art, colors, architecture, stained glass windows to Taste – communion bread, etc. See Revelation or Ezekiel for great descriptions that will move your senses. Be careful that senses don’t deceive, or fall into trap of idolatry.
- 3. Traditionalists** – Love connecting with God through ritual, symbols, and sacraments. Keep a disciplined life of faith with high structure and repetition. Many OT and NT observances and Christian symbols (cross, fish, dove, bread, wine). Be careful not to deify tradition, miss loving people or become judging.
- 4. Ascetics** – Love connecting with God through solitude. Keep senses out as distractions – i.e. Desert Fathers. Enjoy living in strictness as act of love, Watching in the Night – times of prayer and worship, being still, fasting, obeying – humility, working, retreats simplicity, suffering. Be careful of overemphasizing personal piety/inwardness, seeking pain for itself, seeking to gain God’s favour, being judgmental and elitist.
- 5. Activists** – Love connecting with God through action that includes confrontation and righteous indignation. See Moses, Elijah, Habakkuk, Peter. Be careful of being judgmental and elitist.
- 6. Caregivers** – Love connecting with God through acts of service and care. Mother Teresa servants. Temptations – Judging, Neglecting those closest to us
- 7. Enthusiasts** – Mystery and Celebration – dreams, expectancy, prayer. Remember that celebration requires reverence.
- 8. Contemplatives** – Abba Father, secret acts of devotion, secret devotional place.
- 9. Intellectuals** – Theology, History, Creeds, Apologetics, Tapes/Books/Study.
Temptations – knowledge for sake of knowledge, pride, inaction

Recommended Resources

Sacred Pathways, Gary Thomas, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996) ISBN – 0-310-23092-6

Life You've Always Wanted: Spiritual Disciplines for Ordinary People, John Ortberg, (Zondervan, 2002) ISBN – 030212146

Celebration of Discipline, Richard Foster, (Harper-Collins Publishers, 1988), ISBN – 0-06-062839-1

Leader Note: Contact Rob McAlpine at compass@baptist.ca or author Matt Wilkinson – missionbeyond@yahoo.com with any thoughts, questions or suggestions.

Comments and Feedback:

Leader Note: This is your place each week to record significant sharing or growth in the lives of your students for subsequent follow up. You can also use this space to provide feedback on the material. All suggestions are welcome.

Please see the following handout. You have permission to reproduce these handouts for your group.