

How God Transforms Us

Leaning into Your Spiritual Pathway
Pastor Joshua Brooks

Spiritual Malpractice

- “Giving the _____ spiritual prescription to every struggling Christian is no less irresponsible than a doctor prescribing penicillin to every patient.” (Gary Thomas)

God’s Design: Diversity in the Body of Christ

- “The Body is not made up of one part, but _____.” (1 Cor 12:14)

God’s Endgame: Transformation

- “For those God foreknew He also predestined to be _____ to the likeness of His Son.” (Romans 8:29)

Transformation Non-Negotiables (Salvation & Sanctification)

- It is thru _____ alone we are _____ (John 14:6)
- It is thru the _____ we are _____ (1 Thess 5:23-24)

Spiritual Pathways (Connecting with God)

- _____: Loving God in the Outdoors
- _____: Loving God with your Senses
- _____: Loving God thru Ritual & Symbol
- _____: Loving God in Solitude and Simplicity
- _____: Loving God with the Mind
- _____: Loving God thru Mystery & Celebration
- _____: Loving God through Adoration
- _____: Loving through Confrontation & Causes
- _____: Loving God by Loving Others

Biblical Examples of Spiritual Pathways

- Creation: _____ 19:1
- Sensate: _____ (Eze 1)
- Traditionalist: _____ (Book of Acts)
- Ascetic: _____ the Baptist or _____
- Intellectual: _____ or the Apostle _____
- Enthusiast: King _____ (2 Samuel 6)
- Contemplative: _____ of Bethany (Luke 10:38-42)
- Activist: _____ (Book of Exodus)
- Caregiver/Server: _____ 58

Next Steps

1. _____ your primary spiritual pathway
2. _____ into your primary spiritual pathway
3. _____ all of the spiritual pathways

Identifying your Spiritual Pathway

*Now the body
is not made up
of one part
but of many.
~1 Corinthians 12:14*

Rate each statement on a scale of 1 to 5. 1 being the least true and 5 being the most true.

1. ___ I feel closest to God when I'm surrounded by what He has made - the mountains, the forests, or the sea.
2. ___ I enjoy attending a "high church" service with incense and formal Communion or Eucharist.
3. ___ The words tradition and history are very appealing to me.
4. ___ Taking an overnight retreat by myself at a monastery where I could spend large amounts of time alone in a small room, or praying to God and studying His Word, are activities I would enjoy.
5. ___ I would like to awaken the church from its apathy.
6. ___ I feel closest to God when I see Him in the needy, the poor, the sick, and the imprisoned. I feel God's presence most strongly when I am sitting quietly beside the bed of someone who is lonely or ill or taking a meal to someone in need. You can count on me to offer a ride or volunteer for helping activities.
7. ___ God is an exciting God, and we should be excited about worshiping Him. I don't understand how some Christians can say they love God, and then act like they're going to a funeral whenever they walk into church.
8. ___ The words lover, intimacy, and heart are very appealing to me.
9. ___ I feel close to God when I participate in several hours of uninterrupted study time - reading God's Word or good Christian books and then perhaps having an opportunity to teach (or participate in a discussion with) a small group.
10. ___ I feel cut off if I have to spend too much time indoors just listening to speakers or singing songs. Nothing helps me connect with God better than being outside.
11. ___ I'd have a difficult time worshiping in a church building that is plain and lacks a sense of awe or majesty. I have a difficult time worshiping through second-rate Christian art or music.
12. ___ Participating in a formal liturgy or prayer-book service, developing symbols that I could place in my car, home, or office, and developing a Christian calendar for our family to follow are activities that I would enjoy.
13. ___ I would really enjoy spending time on a night watch, taking a short vow of silence, simplifying my life.
14. ___ I connect with God best when I'm cooperating with Him in standing up for His justice: writing letters to government officials and newspaper editors, picketing at an abortion clinic, urging people to vote, or becoming familiar with current issues.
15. ___ I grow weary of Christians who spend their time singing songs while a sick neighbor goes without a hot meal or a family in need doesn't get help fixing their car.
16. ___ The words celebration and joy are very appealing to me.
17. ___ I really enjoy having thirty minutes of uninterrupted time a day to sit in quiet prayer and enjoy His presence.

18. ____ I spend more money on books than music tapes.
19. ____ I would prefer to worship God by spending an hour beside a small brook than by participating in a group service.
20. ____ The words sensuous, colorful, and aromatic are very appealing to me.
21. ____ I would really enjoy developing a personal rule (or ritual) of prayer.
22. ____ I feel closest to God when I am alone and there is nothing to distract me from focusing on His presence.
23. ____ I get very frustrated if I see apathetic Christians who don't become active. I want to drop everything else I'm doing and help the church overcome its apathy.
24. ____ The words service and compassion are very appealing to me.
25. ____ I would enjoy attending a workshop on learning to worship through dance or attending several worship sessions with contemporary music. I expect that God is going to move in some unexpected way.
26. ____ When I think of God, I think of love, friendship, and adoration more than anything else.
27. ____ I connect with God best 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.
28. ____ If I could escape to a garden to pray on a cold day, walk through a park on a warm day, and take a trip by myself to the mountains on another day, I would be very happy.
29. ____ I would really enjoy using drawing, exercise, or art to improve my prayer life.
30. ____ 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.
31. ____ I would describe my faith as more "internal" than "external."
32. ____ The words courageous, confrontation, and social activism are very appealing to me.
33. ____ I sense God's power when I am counseling a friend who has lost a job, preparing meals for or fixing the car of a family in need, or spending a week at an orphanage in Mexico.
34. ____ I spend more money on music and worship tapes than books.
35. ____ I would rather be alone with God, contemplating who He is, than participating in a formal liturgy or being distracted by a walk outside.
36. ____ I get frustrated when the church focuses too much on feelings and spiritual experience. Of far more importance is the need to understand the Christian faith and have proper doctrine.
37. ____ Seeing God's beauty in nature is more moving to me than understanding new concepts, participating in a formal religious service, or participating in social causes.
38. ____ I feel closest to God when I'm in an environment that allows my senses to come alive - when I can see, smell, hear, and almost taste His majesty.
39. ____ Individualism within the church is a real danger. Christianity is a corporate faith, and most of our worship should have a corporate expression.
40. ____ The words silence, solitude, and discipline are very appealing to me.
41. ____ Activities like confronting a social evil, attending a meeting to challenge the new curriculum before the local school board, and volunteering on a political campaign are important to me.
42. ____ I would rather nurse someone to health or help someone repair their house than teach an adult Sunday school class, go on a prayer and fasting retreat, or take a lonely walk in the woods.
43. ____ I connect with God best when my heart is sent soaring and I feel like I want to burst, worship God all day long, and shout out His name. Celebrating God and His love is my favorite form of worship.
44. ____ The most difficult times in my faith are when I can't feel God's presence within me.
45. ____ The words concepts and truth are very appealing to me.

Spiritual Pathway Assessment Scoring

Transfer the numbers from the assessment to this grid and total each column.

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.
<u>Total</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Total</u>
<i>Naturalist</i>	<i>Sensate</i>	<i>Traditionalist</i>	<i>Ascetic</i>	<i>Activist</i>	<i>Caregiver</i>	<i>Enthusiast</i>	<i>Contemplative</i>	<i>Intellectual</i>

Spiritual Pathways

Naturalists Loving God Outdoors

Who Are We?

- We find God in the “cathedral” of His creation.
- God speaks to us through creation.
- We learn spiritual lessons in observing creation, (i.e., the metamorphosis of a caterpillar becoming a butterfly).
- Creation teaches us of God’s beauty and also of His power and judgment (i.e., rain can nourish the ground and can flood a region).

Biblical Examples

- God’s first dwelling with us was in a garden. (Genesis 2) There’s a garden at the end of the story, too. (Revelation 22)
- “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the works of his hands.” Psalm 19:1
- David says that God’s green pastures and quiet waters restore his soul. Psalm 23:2-3

What Are Our Pitfalls?

- Individualism: Jesus spent time outdoors to prepare to go back into the world. We must make sure we are not using creation to escape the call to obey Jesus.
- Spiritual Delusion: Anything “received” on a walk with God should not be considered authoritative, but merely advice that must be tested. The Bible is our only sure guide. Satan can provide counterfeit experiences that can lead us astray.
- Idolizing Nature: Be wary of the heresy of pantheism—the worship of nature. It is not true that God is in all of nature, or that nature is God. The Bible teaches, “the earth is the Lord’s.” Pantheism twists it to “The earth is the Lord.” Pantheism is a New Age philosophy. Nevertheless, do not allow the lie of pantheism rob you of worshipping God through an appreciation of what He has made.

Suggested Activities

- Fully commit your life to Christ. The more you appreciate the Creator, the more you will appreciate His creation.
- Consider the greatness of creation—mountains, sky and oceans all portray the immense power, wisdom and goodness of God.
- View God’s world as His cathedral where He wants to meet with you and others.
- Take your Bible outside and read it; meditate while feasting your eyes and spirit on natural beauty.
- Worship as the dawn breaks.

Scriptures to Ponder

Psalm 19
Psalm 29
Psalm 104
Isaiah 41:17-19
Mark 6:31-32
Romans 1:20

Reflection Questions

1. Where and when do you feel closest to God?
2. How is worship different for you than when you are inside listening to speakers versus outside enjoying nature?
3. How do you balance the need for natural beauty and quiet with the command to be in community?

Sensates

Loving God with the Senses

Who Are We?

- We are moved by worship that involves the five senses of taste, touch, smell, sound and sight.
- Sometimes experiencing God comes with overwhelming stimulation.
- We want to be lost in the awe, beauty and splendor of God.
- We are drawn particularly to liturgical, the majestic and the grand. Worship is most meaningful when it is filled with sights, sounds and smells.

Biblical Examples

- Ezekiel feels a wind, sees flashing lightning, hears the sound of wings, and is asked to eat a scroll that tastes sweet. After all this he sits down stunned for seven days. Ezekiel 1 & 3
- John is overwhelmed by loud trumpet voices, blazing eyes, and sounds of rushing waters as he writes to the seven churches in Revelation.

What are Our Pitfalls?

- Idolizing Beauty: Someone could leave a very beautiful liturgical service satisfied by the sensuous experience without having entered the true presence of God.
- Worshipping Worship: Sensory stimulation is not the same thing as a true commitment of the will. Be cautious of using your senses to worship a worship experience.
- Idolatry: Believing elements of worship or icons themselves hold spiritual power.

Suggested Activities

- *Sound:* Read the scriptures out loud. We often have our hearts and thoughts challenged when we hear the Word of God.
- *Smell:* No incense offering will wipe out a single sin. However, incense isn't used to find favor with God, but to help us pray. It is a means, not an end. It serves to remind us that our prayers are rising to the throne of God. (Revelation 5)
- *Touch:* Holding a rubber band could help you pray for a pliable heart. Carry a nail in your pocket to remind you of Christ's sacrifice on the cross.
- *Sight:* Check out the religious art of Rembrandt and others. Use a picture of someone while you pray for them to increase your motivation to pray.
- Design a time with God that allows you to engage all five of your senses.
- *Taste:* Taste some salts as you pray for your influence in a non-Christian environment. Jesus says He is the bread of life. Remind yourself of this when you taste it.
- *Experience:* Enter into a scripture passage. Be one of the characters and experience the passage.

Scriptures to Ponder

2 Samuel 22:7-17

Taste: Psalm 34:8

Touch: Luke 5:12-13

Look: 1 Samuel 16:7

Hear: Deuteronomy 4:33-36, Psalm 96, John 10:27

Smell: Ephesians 5:2, 2 Corinthians 2:14-15

Speak: Psalm 34:1-3, Psalm 71:14-24, 119:171

Reflection Questions

1. How do you feel when you are worshipping in a plain, unadorned church? How does it affect your ability to focus on God?
2. Have you been in a service that incorporated incense? An orchestra or pipe organ? Ritual dance? Signing? Processions of banners or crosses? How is your worship experience enhanced or hindered by these sensory additions to the worship service?
3. How does having something to touch, smell, look at or listen to affect your personal worship time?

Traditionalists

Loving God through Ritual and Symbol

Who Are We?

- Religious practices are a way we embody spiritual truths.
- We value the knowledge that God invented and sometimes commanded religious practices.
- We are nourished by what are often termed the historic dimensions of faith: rituals, symbols, sacraments, and sacrifice.
- We have a need for ritual and structure.

Biblical Examples

- Abraham and Moses expressed their faith by building altars.
- Peter and John observed regular, set times of prayer.
- Paul willingly underwent the ritual of purification.

What Are Our Pitfalls?

- **Serving God without Knowing God:** Religion can serve faith, but it doesn't substitute for or replace faith.
- **Neglecting Social Obligations:** It is not enough for us to cultivate holiness; we must reach out and minister to others.
- **Judging Others:** Religious practices can powerfully enhance a person's faith, but it can also destroy corporate faith if it is used to criticize, measure or divide.
- **Repeating Mechanically:** Without attention, ritual becomes an empty exercise that fills us with insincerity.
- Do not let the form of your worship become an idol.

Suggested Activities

- Select a Psalm to say every morning and one for each evening.
- Write and repeat your own prayers.
- Follow the Church calendar and celebrate significant days, e.g., Pentecost, Advent, etc.
- Use symbols or art in your home: Anchor [hope], banner [triumph], circle [eternity], crown [sovereignty], lamp [wisdom].
- Engage in fasting during Lent or other seasons.
- Create a space in your home that is specially set aside for prayer, reading Scripture, celebrating communion, etc.

Scriptures to Ponder

Genesis 12:7-8
Joshua 1:8
Nehemiah 8:3
Luke 4:14-21
1 Timothy 4:1-6

Reflection Questions

1. In what ways did men and women in the Bible and in church history use ritual to embody spiritual truth?
2. What rituals, symbols, etc. would you like to incorporate into your life? How do you think they would affect your personal worship time?
3. What rituals are necessary for you to be able to worship easily?
4. Have you ever found you were engaging in empty ritual? Are there new practices or symbols that might rekindle a genuine connection to the presence of God?

Ascetics

Loving God in Solitude and Simplicity

Who Are We?

- We gravitate towards solitude, austerity, simplicity, and deep commitment.
- We are often distracted by our senses so we will try to shut them out.
- We live strict lives of self-denial so that we will be free to contemplate God.
- True ascetics are strict with themselves but treat others with supernatural gentleness.

Biblical Examples

- Nazarite vow of being set apart for a period of time--abstaining from alcohol, refraining from cutting hair.
- John the Baptist lived a solitary and ascetic life.
- Jesus fasted for 40 days in solitude and had moments of solitude during ministry. Mark 1:35 and Matthew 26:36.

What Are Our Pitfalls?

- Overemphasizing Personal Piety: Be careful that your need for spiritual refreshment is balanced with your obligation to reach out to others. Be intentional in seeking out other Christians with whom to fellowship.
- Seeking Pain for Its Own Sake: Masochism is a sickness, not a spiritual path. Asceticism is a means to an end, never an end in itself.
- Seeking to Gain God's Favor: It is futile to try to win God's approval or forgiveness by developing an extraordinary holiness. There is nothing we can do that can make God love us any more. His love is absolute and His forgiveness is based on a prior work completed by Jesus, not our current spiritual practices.

Suggested Activities

- Create a prayer room in your home.
- Fast. Deny yourself some pleasure, entertainment or comfort and then focus on purity of mind and heart.
- Worship in the quiet of the night or rise very early in the morning for worship and prayer.
- Practice silence—attend a silent retreat, participate in a silent meal, be silent for a few hours.
- Do a 24 hour fast (from food). Use the time you save by not eating to read your Bible and pray.
- Do a 30 day simplicity fast eating very basic and inexpensive foods. Give the money you save to a ministry that serves the poor.
- Fast from TV/media for a week, using that time to feed your soul and mind and relationships.
- Do a "covet check" in your life. Are you enviously desiring anything? Ask God to help you let go of the desire to possess and offer up a prayer of thanksgiving for all He has given you.

Scriptures to Ponder

Numbers 6
Daniel 9:3
Matthew 4:1
Matthew 26:36-39

Reflection Questions

1. What does "austerity" mean to you? How do you incorporate it into your life?
2. What does "discipline" look like in your life? In what ways does it satisfy you? Where would you like to experience more of it?
3. What specific steps are you taking or do you need to take to ensure you engage in meaningful fellowship with others rather than isolating yourself?

Intellectuals

Loving God with the Mind

Who Are We?

- We enjoy studying doctrine.
- We live in the world of concepts.
- Many times we feel closest to God when we first understand something new about Him. When our minds are awakened, our adoration is unleashed.
- If we aren't learning new things about God, our relationship with Him may feel stagnant.
- We understand that conforming our thoughts to the thoughts of God enables right living.
- We place high value on understanding the Scriptures and can spend considerable time contemplating a challenging verse or concept.

Biblical Examples

- The Levites were released from other duties so they could function on the one duty of studying and teaching—loving God with the mind.
- The Apostle Paul, author of half of the New Testament—especially the book of Romans.
- The Bereans study of the scriptures enabled them to accept the teaching of the Good News, that Jesus is the Christ.

What Are Our Pitfalls?

- Enjoying Controversy: Discussions aimed at defeating rather than caring for the welfare of the other person is not godly.
- Knowing Rather Than Doing: Knowing what is right is not a substitute for doing what is right. The truly wise person is someone who actively applies the ways of righteousness which they have studied.
- Being Proud: Avoid the temptation to correct everyone.

Suggested Activities

- Select one biblical/spiritual subject per year for in-depth study.
- Take a theology course online
- Delve into the five basic building blocks for a Christian mind: church history, biblical studies, systematic theology, ethics and apologetics.
- Ask a pastor for his top 10 most influential books and read through several of them this next year.
- Study the seven basic topics in systematic theology: God, humankind, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the Church, eschatology and revelation.
- Listen to sermon podcasts as you commute to work, exercise, travel, etc.
- Read through Proverbs asking God to give you the kind of wisdom that gets lived out in real life (that doesn't just stay in your head).
- Pray the Solomon prayer for wisdom (1 Kings 3:7-9).

Scriptures to Ponder

Proverbs 1:5-7

Matthew 22:37

Reflection Questions

1. What are some of the most exciting discoveries you have made about God recently? How have they influenced your worship times?
2. In what ways have you applied your intellectual understanding of the Gospel to the service of others? In what other ways could you do so?
3. How do you respond to the statement: Worship is God revealing Himself to you, not You discovering God?

Enthusiasts

Loving God through Mystery and Celebration

Who Are We?

- We enjoy celebratory worship as well as many of the more supernatural forms of faith.
- We like to let go and experience God on the precipice of excitement and awe. We want to clap our hands, shout and dance.
- We recognize that we worship and serve a supernatural God who manifests Himself to us in supernatural ways.
- Sometimes we may be using a gift God has given us and say something that sounds profound and then think, "Where in the world did that come from?"
- We don't want to just know concepts, but to experience them, to feel them, and to be moved by them.

Biblical Examples

- David dancing before the Lord (2 Samuel 6)
- The Corinthian believers
- Daniel praises God for revealing a mystery in a vision
- Purim celebration (Esther 9)
- Killing the fatted calf, music & dancing for the return of the lost son (Luke 15)

What Are Our Pitfalls?

- Seeking Experience for Experience's Sake: Be careful to remain true to seeking God rather than searching for new experiences. Just because you feel good during a time of worship doesn't mean you have offered up your will in an appropriate manner.
- Being Independent: Remember to stay rooted in a strong church and healthy relationships so that others can help you interpret your encounters with God.
- Equating Good Feelings with Good Worship: Feelings come and go. Don't become dependent on your feelings.
- While celebrating how awesome God is, remember to appropriately reverence God.
- If God brings an insight into a situation or gives you a warning through a dream, remember to check the soundness of it in light of scripture.
- Arrogance. We all know people who act as if they have the inside scoop on everything that God is up to, not only in their own lives, but in everyone else's as well. Be on guard against presumptions.

Suggested Activities

- Use your imagination to put yourself into the scene when you are reading Bible passages. Try to understand how the participants were feeling, thinking, acting.
- If you have lost your ability to celebrate, spending time with children might be a good way to recapture the joy and wonder of your faith.
- Cultivate the mystery of expectancy: Ask God to bring someone in your path to whom you can minister or start a conversation with a stranger.
- Search the scriptures for understanding about the Holy Spirit and the gifts He has for you. (Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:8-11, Luke 11:13)

Scriptures to Ponder

I Chronicles 13:8	Luke 19:35-40
2 Chronicles 30:21-27	I Corinthians 14:26-40
Daniel 2:16-23	Ephesians 5:18-19

Reflection Questions

1. How do you most like to celebrate God? What are some other ways you might like to try?
2. How do you feel when others around you don't sing at all or sing softly throughout a song service, don't raise their hand or move at all during worship?
3. In what ways does God speak to you in your daily life? What form does it take? How do you react?

Contemplatives

Loving God through Adoration

Who Are We?

- We seek to gaze lovingly into the God's face and be caught up in the rapture of the experience.
- We enjoy God and want to learn to love Him in even deeper ways.
- We desire privacy and quiet to look upon the face of our heavenly Beloved and give all of ourselves to God.

Biblical Examples

- Mary sitting at the Lord's feet. Luke 10:38-42
- The song of Mary, the mother of Jesus in Luke 1

What Are Our Pitfalls?

- Losing Balance: Be careful not to allow your love for time alone with God to preclude spending time with others. God can reveal Himself to us just as much in a conversation with a fellow believer as He can when we are on our knees in prayer.
- Creating a Vacuum: Be cautious of practices that speak of emptying yourself and creating a vacuum. A Christian wants to be filled with the Holy Spirit, not emptied out.
- Remember to move beyond meditation to an alignment of our will and obedience into conformity with Christ.

Suggested Activities

- Use the "Jesus Prayer"—"Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner"—to practice the presence of God and reliance on Him.
- Practice listening prayer. Meditate on a single verse or story from scripture, being attentive to what God wants to tell you.
- Give an anonymous gift to someone in need. This ensures that you are doing it only for the love of God.
- Carry a pocket piece—something tactile to remind you Who you serve.
- Read through the events of Christ's crucifixion—death sentencing, Gethsemane, being stripped, beaten, mocked and nailed to the cross, being removed from the cross and being laid in the tomb. Pause and picture the truth of each event.
- Create some extra "alone time" with God with no other agenda than to simply enjoy each other's company.
- Sing/Listen to worship music or hymns about love and devotion to Christ.

Scriptures to Ponder

Psalm 63
Matthew 26:6-13
Luke 10:38-42
John 15:9-17

Reflection Questions

1. When do you feel most loved by God? In what tangible ways does He show His love to you?
2. Do you ever lose the sense of God's presence? What happens to you then—in your emotions? In your spirit? What do you do to restore that sense?
3. What is your favorite way to picture God? Are there any images of God that you find difficult to contemplate?

Activists

Loving God through Confrontation and Causes

Who Are We?

- We serve a God of justice and are spiritually nourished through the battle.
- We adopt either social or evangelistic causes.
- We are comfortable with confrontation.
- We are energized more by interaction with others, even in conflict, than by being alone or in small groups.
- We tend to see the world and its issues in “black and white.”

Biblical Examples

- Jesus cleansing the temple
- Moses leading the people of Israel out of slavery
- Nehemiah rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem
- Midwives refusing the king's order to put Hebrew boys to death (Exodus 1:15-22)

What Are Our Pitfalls?

- **Becoming Judgmental:** Need to remember that confronting issues needs to be coupled with compassion towards others. A self-righteous, critical attitude is not a reflection of the compassion of Christ.
- **Ambition:** Ambition is often a fight against powerlessness and a fight for control. The ambitious person can be inherently selfish.
- **Elitism and Resentment:** An activist may enjoy confrontation and not understand why others may fear it. They also have little appreciation for other spiritual gifts and callings and can condemn others for their lack of activism.
- **Preoccupation with Activity and Statistics:** Activists must leave the results to God so as not to become consumed and driven by success rather than by the Holy Spirit.

Suggested Activities

- Spread a map in front of you and pray for unreached people groups.
- Pray with your Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other.
- Consider God's faithfulness in the light of so much pain and moral depravity in the world. Consider His great patience. He is working even when we see no evidence of it.
- Reach out to the less fortunate or those in crisis—contribute to a local food bank, volunteer at a crisis pregnancy center, investigate a foreign mission trip
- Go on a prayer walk around a building or in your neighborhood.
- Write to your member of Congress regarding an issue that you feel strongly about. Ask God to help you craft the letter in a way that reflects His love and righteousness.
- Is there a modern day injustice that makes you angry such as slavery sex trafficking, etc.? Spend time asking God if and how He would have you get involved in working with Him to end that injustice.
- Read a biography of an activist that God used mightily to change the world (i.e. William Wilberforce, Martin Luther King, Jr, etc.)
- Sign up for Voice of the Martyrs newsletter and receive prayer alerts for the persecuted church.

Scriptures to Ponder

Psalm 7
Proverbs 24:11-12
Ezekiel 33:1-20
Matthew 23
Matthew 25:35-36
John 4:34

Reflection Questions

1. What issues make God angry?
2. Think of the last social or Christian cause you were involved in. Did it draw you closer to God? In what ways? Was there anything about it that pulled you or others away from God?
3. How do you feel when you are working for a cause and other Christians don't seem interested in it, or even if they are interested, don't do anything to help? Are you able to resolve those feelings? How do you do this?

Caregivers

Loving God by Loving Others

Who Are We?

- We enjoy serving God by serving others.
- We see Christ in the poor and needy and our faith is built up by interacting with other people.
- We don't view giving care as a chore but as a form of worship. Caring for others recharges our batteries.
- We view the acts of mercy we perform as a practical way of showing our love for God.

Biblical Examples

- Good Samaritan
- Tabitha (Acts 9)
- Joseph of Arimathea providing burial tomb for Jesus
- Isaiah 58

What Are Our Pitfalls?

- Caregiving is not a license to judge others who serve God in different ways.
- Caregiving can be an act of "taking" if you are serving others for self-validation or so that others will love and need you in return.
- Be careful that you don't neglect your own family in your zeal to love others.

Suggested Activities

- "Adopt" someone — a prisoner, a neighborhood child or an elderly person.
- Open your home to students and neighborhood kids, become a youth leader
- Help with practical needs: raking leaves for the elderly or helping with home or car repairs.
- Volunteer at a pregnancy crisis center
- Ask God to direct you to someone this week that you could serve and encourage as an act of worship to Him.
- Write an encouraging letter to someone who is discouraged. Use scripture and pray for them in the letter itself.
- Join a serving team at church and view your service to others as an act of worship to God.

Scriptures to Ponder

Isaiah 58
Matthew 25:31-46
John 13
1 John 3:17
Philippians 2:4
Hebrews 6:10
James 1:27

Reflection Questions

1. How do you feel about people who are not actively ministering to the poor, sick, etc.?
2. Do you ever minister to others out of your own need? Or because you feel you have to? Contrast that experience with a time when you freely helped someone out of a desire to minister to him/her.
3. Do you have relationships with people who do not "need" you? If not, how might you begin to develop friendships outside your circle of ministry?