

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR TIME WITH GOD

↔↔ DAY 1: SPIRITUAL PERSONALITY (1-1.5 HRS) ↔↔

Time:

Assessment from Ortberg/Barton OR Thomas

We are uniquely made to worship and relate to God. This *connection* is *personal*. Therefore, what works for another might not work for you. **Disclaimer** – even *this* discussion might annoy some of you if you're connecting pathways are “non-intellectual”.

The goal: *Transformation*.

(Spiritualists would say we progress in Transmutation to Transformation to Transfiguration.) We are changed at our rebirth and experience complete consummation with Christ upon our resurrection. Until then... we seek what Paul calls.

We cannot rely on outward signs to determine our inward transformation.

What do I mean by this? Well, we can sit here and have a conversation about all that you can do to strengthen your relationship with Christ and connect with him better... but if you've never truly yielded your heart to him, trusting in his death as payment for your sin, then you must go no further.

And this can lead to frustration. (and doubt, resentment, jealousy)

Or even Spiritual Superiority.

- *Matthew 5: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.*
- *A paradox of the soul is that it is incapable of satisfying itself, but it is also incapable of living without satisfaction. You were made for soul-satisfaction, but you will only ever find it in God. The soul craves to be secure. The soul craves to be loved. The soul craves to be significant, and we find these only in God in a form that can satisfy us. That's why the psalmist says to God, "Because your love is better than life . . . my soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods." Soul and appetite and satisfaction are dominant themes in the Bible — the soul craves because it is meant for God. "My soul, find rest in God." Excerpt From: John Ortberg. "Soul Keeping." iBooks. <https://itun.es/us/V7ViT.l>*

"According to Jesus, four elements (in Mark 12:30) are essential to every true expression of faith. It is essential that we love God with all our heart (adoration), soul (will), mind (belief), and strength (body)." Excerpt From: Gary L. Thomas. "Sacred Pathways." iBooks.

Questions

When have you felt the closest to God?

What makes you frustrated...

...in worshiping in church?
 ...studying the Bible?
 ... fellowshipping with others?

What are your top 1-3 spiritual pathways based on the questionnaire?

Time: 3 min Find someone whose strongest “pathway” is the same as yours. Tell each other how you experience connection with God when you focus on that area. (If no one shares your strongest, look for someone who shares one in your top 2-3.)

3 min Find someone who has a different pathway. (preferably one whose pathway is *very different* or where you rated yourself on the lower side). Share a reason why you think you’re made that way...to connect with God uniquely.

Together: Let’s hear how you identified with someone... or how you saw your personality in contrast to another’s.

Can you think of someone in the Bible who might share your personality?

Spiritual Personality	Pairing in Bible	Cautions
Relational – with others	John; Joseph; Ruth	Dependency; insecurity
Intellectual – learn; study leads to an awakening. Unraveling a mystery.	Paul, Solomon	Arguing; Dissatisfaction with mystery
Worship – corporate/private celebration; ritualistic or free form	David; Ezra; Moses	Emotion-seeking
Activist – on a mission for change; battle-seeking.	Peter, Joshua, Mordecai; Nehemiah; Noah	Judgmentalism; “black and white”; Impatience
Contemplative – silence; reflection; awareness of senses	King David, Jeremiah	Isolation
Serving* (SS might be high here. Worth talking about?) – “completing Kingdom tasks; caregiving	Abraham, Aaron, Samuel	Infatuation with being needed
Creation – wonder in natural settings. ; appreciation for art	Moses, Elijah (Francis of Assisi)	Boredom (in worship/teaching); dissatisfaction with mundane.

Now let’s talk about what it might look like to restructure your devotional life in consideration of your personality.

- 1) Make a list of worship songs that reflect personality. *Be lifted.*
- 2) Study the life of someone in the Bible who might share. *Be led.*
- 3) Explore nuances and disciplines that build on strong areas/pathways, but also experiment with the weaker areas. *Be gracious to yourself.*
- 4) Spend time telling God “thank you” for the specific ways he connects with you. *Be grateful.*

On Friday, we're going to take this to another level and discuss the Spiritual Disciplines.

Time:

The Bible "experience"

We read it. *It reads us.*

The Bible is a like a living organism, interacting with us with our unique "spiritual personality". Each of us can be drawn into the action of obedient soldiers, the courage of humble servants standing up to giants, the passion of singing kings, the relational dynamics between mentors and friends, the depth of doctrine, the imagination of a coming-kingdom, the majesty of Creation.

Studying Scripture is a *Discipline*.

Time:

REMINDER: Two questions: Have you come to trust Christ as your Lord and Savior?
(2) Having trusted Christ, are you prepared to consecrate yourself in devotion to him?

↔ DAY 2: SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES. (1 HR) ↵

1 Timothy 4:7 "Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness"

When we exercise, we build muscles that we intend to use regularly, and seek support from when we face an unusual obstacle. Our bodies face daily stress and extraordinarily intense situations.

We usually experience the most frustration when we attempt to use those muscles (that skill, etc) and we are too weak. The same goes for our Spirit – through the teachings of Scripture and the wisdom of spiritual leaders, we learn there are many disciplines that can strengthen us and prepare us for daily and unplanned demands on our souls.

NOTE: The disciplines will never grant us salvation. They are derived from Scripture, but *not always* given as explicit lists or instruction. Sometimes they are expected and present in the existing Judaic culture. They are tools we see in the Story of the Bible and no doubt there are disciplines that we will not discuss today. (I.e. *abiblical*: journaling, letter-writing; *biblical*: witnessing, suffering/willingly enduring persecution, forgiving/peacemaking)

Richard Foster:

1. The inward disciplines:

- Prayer – communicating with God ([Matt. 6:9](#))
- Meditation – focusing on God and his will ([Phil. 4:8](#))

- Fasting – a reminder of the source of all nourishment ([Luke 5:35](#))
- Study – careful attention to the reality that God reveals to us, especially through Holy Scripture ([Luke 2:46](#))

2. The outward disciplines (inward realities resulting in outward lifestyles)

- Simplicity – seeking God's Kingdom first ([Matt. 6:33](#))
- Submission – placing God's will above one's own ([Luke 22:42](#))
- Solitude – withdrawing from the world to spend time with God ([Matt. 14:23](#))
- Service – supportive action toward others ([Mark 10:45](#))

3. The corporate disciplines

- Confession – acknowledging one's sin with and to others in the community of faith ([James 5:16](#))
- Guidance – giving and receiving direction from others along the journey with Jesus ([Acts 15:8](#))
- Celebration – taking joy in what God has done ([1 Cor 5:8](#))
- Worship – giving God glory through attitudes and actions ([1 Cor. 14:26](#))

Dallas Willard's list // *The Spirit of the Disciplines*

Disciplines of Abstinence

These are ways of denying ourselves something we want or need in order to make space to focus on and connect with God.

- **Solitude:** Refraining from interacting with other people in order to be alone with God and be found by him. (Solitude is completed by silence.)
- **Silence:** Not speaking in a quiet place in order to quiet our minds and whole self and attend to God's presence. Also, not speaking so that we can listen to others and bless them.
- **Fasting:** Going without food (or something else, ie tech) for a period of intense prayer — the fast may be complete or partial.
- **Sabbath:** Doing no work to rest in God's person and provision; praying and playing with God and others. (God designed this for one day a week. We can practice it for shorter periods too.)
“Sabbath is that uncluttered time and space in which we can distance ourselves from our own activities enough to see what God is doing.”— Eugene Peterson
- **Secrecy:** Not making our good deeds or qualities known to let God or others receive attention and to find our sufficiency in God alone.
- **Submission:** Not asserting ourselves in order to come under the authority, wisdom, and power of Jesus Christ as our Lord, King, and Master. (If you think of this as submitting to a person as unto Christ then it's a discipline of engagement.)

Disciplines of Engagement

These are ways of connecting with God and other people, conversing honestly with them in order to love and be loved.

- **Bible Reading:** Trusting the Holy Spirit-inspired words of Scripture as our guide, wisdom, and strength for life. + Scripture memory + Study
- **Worship:** Praising God's greatness, goodness, and beauty in words, music, ritual, or silence.
- **Prayer:** Conversing with God about what we're experiencing and doing together. (As we see in the Lord's Prayer the main thing we do in prayer is to make requests of our Father for one another.)
- **Soul Friendship:** Engaging fellow disciples of Jesus in prayerful conversation or other spiritual practices.
- **Personal Reflection:** Paying attention to our inner self in order to grow in love for God, others, and self.
- **Service:** Humbly serving God by overflowing with his love and compassion to others, especially those in need.

Again, consider a relationship – a personal *or* romantic relationship...

What kinds of things do you do for someone you love/care about...even when you don't enjoy it or benefit the same way? (*yes, even physical affection counts*)

Why do you do it? Because that person enjoys it, needs it, feels loved by it... Or as Gary Chapman in *5 Love Languages* puts it, you fill up that person's "love tank". The actions of love are a means to a deeper, more fulfilling relationship. Likewise, the disciplines are only a *means*... not an end. *"And so we are not godly just because we practice the spiritual disciplines. That was the great error of the Pharisees. They felt by doing these things they were godly. No, they are means to godliness. Rightly motivated, they are the means to godliness."* - Don Whitney