

Discover Your Soul's
Path to God

SACRED PATHWAYS

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STUDY GUIDE

A Study Guide for Sacred Pathways

"This study has been prepared by Adalee Lewis and is offered for your benefit. It has not been written by Gary Thomas, nor have the suggested books been compiled by him. It is a labor of love offered by a reader to those groups who might appreciate a headstart in their own effort to study Sacred Pathways in a group format."

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Chapter Four

ASCETICS

Loving God in Solitude and Simplicity

DESCRIPTION

"Ascetics want nothing more than to be left alone in prayer. Take away the liturgy, the trappings of religion, the noise of the outside world. Let there be nothing to distract them - no pictures, no loud music - and leave them alone to pray in silence and simplicity.

Ascetics live a fundamentally internal existence. Even when they are part of a group of people, they might seem to be isolated from the others. ...uncomfortable in an environment that keeps them from 'listening to the quiet'." (25)

"It is in these dark, intense, lonely times that ascetics' souls awaken." (97)

"Ascetics live strict lives of self-denial so that they would be free to contemplate God." (102)

"True ascetics are strict with themselves but treat others with supernatural gentleness." (103)

"...modern ascetics...don't have time to find a desert to express our faith; inner detachment allows us to find a lonely desert in the midst of the busiest city." (100)

"He (St. Francis) devoured fasting as a man devours food. He plunged after poverty as men have dug madly for gold." (100)

CAUTIONS

An ascetic will need to be intentional in seeking out other Christians with whom to fellowship. We need feedback from our brothers and sisters to be able to see ourselves clearly.

WELL KNOWN ASCETICS

Michael Card, John the Baptist, Daniel, Jerome, St. Francis of Assisi

SCRIPTURES TO PONDER

Num. 6; Isa. 64:6; Dan. 9:3; Joel 1:13-14; 2:12; Zech. 7:1-10; Mt. 4:1; 6:5-6, 16-17; 14:13, 22-23; Mt. 26:36-39; Mk. 1:35; 6:30-32; 14:32-36; Lk. 22:39-46; Jn. 17

SONGS TO ENHANCE WORSHIP

Ah, Holy Jesus
 Be Still
 Cause Me To Come
 Give Ear to My Words (Psa. 5)
 Glory To the Lamb
 He is Lord
 Hide Me in Your Holiness
 Holy and Anointed One
 Holy Spirit, You are Welcome in This Place
 I Am Not My Own
 I Worship You, Almighty God
 Joy of My Desire
 King of My Life
 Lord, Have Mercy on Us
 Lord, I Thirst For You
 More Precious Than Silver
 No Higher Calling
 Purify My Heart (Nelson)
 Reign in Me (Bowater)
 Sanctuary
 Seekers of Your Heart
 Speak, Lord, in the Stillness
 When I Look Into Your Holiness
 With My Whole Heart
 You Are My All in All

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. Worship in the quiet of the night; Rise in the early morning for prayer and worship
2. Practice silence - attend a silent retreat, participate in a silent meal
3. Fast; do physical labor as an act of worship
4. Practice obedience - ask God to reveal any rebellious attitudes
5. Simplify your life - clean a closet, have a yard sale, cull your books and papers
6. Look for ways and places to include others in your life.
7. Make it a point to worship regularly in a fellowship of believers.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What does “solitude” mean to you? Can you find this even when you are with a group of people? Explain how you do that.
2. What does “austerity” mean to you? How do you incorporate it into your life?
3. What does “discipline” look like in your life? In what ways does it satisfy you? Where would you like to experience more of it?
4. What are ways you connect with those around you? How satisfying are those connections? Would you like to improve/increase them? Why or why not? How might you change your interactions to make them more satisfactory?

RESOURCES

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