

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 One

Naturalists

Loving God Out Of Doors

DESCRIPTION

"Where we worship can have a profound impact on the quality of our worship. The naturalist seeks to leave the formal architecture and the padded pews to enter an entirely new "cathedral", a place that God himself has built: the out-of-doors." (36)

"...the Bible is meant to be read outside...The phrase "river of life" seems quaint when the words are projected up on a wall; but its power is nearly overwhelming when you stand by a swiftly flowing river."

"God is made known to us 'by the creation, preservation, and government of the universe; which is before our eyes as a most elegant book, wherein all creatures great and small, are as so many characters leading us to see clearly the invisible things of God.'" (40, from the Reformed tradition's Belgic confession)

"...the mending and binding so necessary to heal our stress filled lives may flow through creation. For the spiritually oppressed or the socially injured, a pleasing or quiet natural environment can help provide a spiritual release. Resting by a clear, free-running river or sitting on a sunny slope in blooming desert grassland can bring peace and joy into very clouded souls." (42, from Susan Power Bratton)

"Earth's crammed with heaven and every common bush afire with God. But only he who sees takes off his shoes and the rest sit around it and pick blackberries." (44, from Elizabeth Barrett Browning)

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. Take your Bible outside and read it; meditate while feasting your eyes and spirit on natural beauty
2. Rest
3. Work your way through one of Dr. Pamela Reeve's books
4. Worship as the dawn breaks
5. Go for a walk

WELL KNOWN NATURALISTS

St. Francis of Assisi, Jonathan Edwards, Bernard of Clairvaux, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Susan Power Bratton, Pamela Reeve

SCRIPTURES TO PONDER

Psa. 29; 23; 84; Isa. 41:17-19; Mark 6:31-32; Jn. 4:35;

SONGS TO ENHANCE WORSHIP

All Creatures of Our God and King
Fairest Lord Jesus/Beautiful Savior
For the Beauty of the Earth
Great is Thy Faithfulness
How Great Thou Art
I Wonder as I Wander
I've Got a River of Life
Jesus Shall Reign Wher'er the Sun
Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee
Like a River Glorious
Praise the Lord from the Heavens
The Tree Song
The Trees of the Field

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Where and when do you feel closest to God?
2. How is worship different for you when you are inside listening to speakers, etc. and outside enjoying nature.
3. What could you do (where could you go) that would help you worship more deeply on a regular basis?

4. How do you balance the need for natural beauty and quiet with the command to be in community? What kinds of community activities are satisfying to you spiritually and emotionally?

RESOURCES

Edwards, Jonathan. "The Language and Lessons of Nature"

Muench, David, Marc Muench, Francis of Assisi. *Canticle of the Earth: The Words of Francis of Assisi Celebrated in the Photography of David Muench*. (2002). Sorin Books ISBN: 1893732452

St. Francis of Assisi, Frank Missant Shambhala, *Canticle of the Sun*. 2002. ISBN: 1570629803.

Heaven on Earth: The Inspirational Writings of Saint Francis of Assisi. (1973) ISBN: 0875293220

Song of creation. (2003). Laughing Elephant. ISBN: 1883211344

Dr. Pamela Reeve, *Parables of the forest; Parables of the Sea*.

