

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 Two

Sensates

Loving God With the Senses

DESCRIPTION

“Sensate Christians want to be lost in the awe, beauty, and splendor of God. They are drawn particularly to the liturgical, the majestic, the grand. When these Christians worship, they want to be filled with sights, sounds, and smells that overwhelm them. Incense, intricate architecture, classical music, and formal language send their hearts soaring.” These Christians delight in sensuous onslaught. “The five senses are God’s most effective inroad to their hearts.” (23,24)

“Truth must be embodied to be realized. It must be incorporated to be understood. No religious movement has ever been forceful or popular without a rich corporeality: an image, a rite, a creed, a feeling, a feast, or vision or a sacrament has always been used to embody its truth.” (55, quoted from Von Ogden Vogt.)

“Biblical accounts of the glory of God in the heavens are elaborate affairs, and rarely quiet.” (52)

“Because some very helpful activities in the history of the church (i.e. walking the stations of the cross, using incense, and other such activities) have occasionally become polluted or separated from a vibrant faith, some Christians have thrown most of them away. We have cut too far, however, amputation the arm because we fear an infection in the fingers.” (58, 59)

“Using our bodies to glorify God is much better response than denying the role of the body in worship.” (67, from Vogt)

CAUTIONS

A sensate needs to use discernment when listening to beautiful music, looking at beautiful art, participating in sensually fulfilling worship. Not all that is beautiful is of God.

Don’t deprive yourself of corporate worship just because the building or music or form of the service isn’t beautiful to you.

WELL KNOWN SENSATES

Madeleine L'Engle; Mozart; Handel;

SCRIPTURE TO PONDER

Rev. 8:24; Deut. 6:5; Ezra 1:1-3; 1:26,27; 3:12,13; 43:3; Psa. 45:1; Mal. 1:11; Luke 7:36-38; Rev. 1:10, 13-17; Rev. 4.

taste: Psa. 34:8; I Pet. 2:3

touch: I Sam. 10:26; Mt. 14:36; Lk. 5:12-13; 24:39

look: Lk. 24:39; Jn. 1:36; 4:35; 19:37; Rev. 5:6; I Sam 16:7

hear: Deut. 30:20; Psa. 96; 147; 140; 150; Isa. 3:9; John 10:27; Jas 1:19

smell: Psa. 141:2; 2 Cor. 2:16; Eph 5:2

speak Psa. 34:1; ;119: 171; Isa 6:15

SONGS

All Hail King Jesus
 As We Seek Your Face
 Blow, Oh Cleansing Wind
 Christ The Lord Is Risen Today
 Come and See (Graham Kendrick)
 Crown Him With Many Crowns
 High and Exalted
 Holy, Holy, Holy
 How Beautiful
 I See the Lord
 I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light
 I Will Come and Bow Down
 Jesus, You Are My Life
 Let It Fill the Room
 Let Your Glory Fall
 May the Fragrance
 Purify My Heart (Refiner's Fire)
 Open My Eyes, Lord
 Open the Eyes of My Heart, Lord
 See the Conqu'ror Mounts in Triumph
 The Light of the World Is Jesus

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. Listen to worship-producing music
2. Absorb worship-producing art
3. Sing scripture
4. Create a worship space for yourself: light a candle, set out meaningful articles, e.g., a cross.
5. Use a “pocket piece”
6. Enter into a scripture passage. Be one of the characters. Experience the passage.
7. Vary prayer posture: stand, sit, kneel, lie prostrate

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? other? How is your worship experience enhanced or hindered by these sensory additions to the worship service?
3. Have you yourself participated in dance or some other physical expression during a worship service? How did it affect your whole worship experience?
4. How does having something to touch, smell, look at or listen to affect your personal worship time?
5. How do you react to the statement, “we must take care that our worship of God doesn’t become worship of the worship experience alone”?

RESOURCES

Whitfield and Stoddart, Hearing, Taste and Smell. Pathways of Perception.
Nouwen, Henri J., Return of the Prodigal Son.