

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 Three

TRADITIONALISTS

Loving God Through Ritual and Symbol

DESCRIPTION

“Traditionalists are fed by what are often termed the historic dimensions of faith: rituals, symbols, sacraments, and sacrifice. These Christians tend to have a disciplined life of faith. Some may be seen by others as legalists, defining their faith largely by matters of conduct...Traditionalists have a need for ritual and structure.” (24)

“Many of the religious obligations I had felt ‘delivered from’ in my own youth, I later discovered as potential avenues of spiritual growth. Instead of feeling delivered, I felt cheated, as if I had been taught to live the Christian life without being given something very helpful to assist me.” (93)

“Rituals provide structure for our faith. Once we learn to use them, traditionalists can also incorporate the use of symbols, which provide meaning.” (81)

“Some people react to the word, religion, like a child reacts to the work, bedtime. They rightly fear a form of faith that has no substance, so they stress Christianity is a relationship, not a religion. However, in the context of a true faith, religious practices and rituals can be a powerful force for good - a friend, not an enemy, of a rich and growing relationship with God.” (70)

“There are three elements of the traditionalist pathway: ritual (or liturgical pattern); symbol (or significant image); sacrifice.” (73)

“Imbued with a vibrant faith, the repetition of ritual is a powerful force for good. Without present attention, however, ritual becomes an empty exercise that floods our souls with insincerity.” (91)

CAUTIONS

Do not let the form of your worship become an idol. If any other way to worship seems “wrong”, you may want to explore just why this is.

WELL KNOWN TRADITIONALISTS

Kathleen Norris; Walt Wangerin; Clement of Alexandria; Bonhoeffer

SCRIPTURES TO PONDER

Gen. 12:7,8; Ex. 25:40; 40:12-15; Lev. 10:8-11; Num. 15:37-40; 21:4-9; Josh. 1:8; 2 Kings 18:4; Ezra 8:32, 35; Neh. 8:3; Jer. 7:4-7; Amos 5:21-24; Mt. 23:27; Lk. 4:16; Acts 3:1; 10; 16:13; 21:26; Rom. 3:25; 8:3; Col. 2; 16-17; 1 Tim. 4:1-5

SONGS TO ENHANCE WORSHIP

All Glory, Laud and Honor
 Come, Ye Disconsolate
 Glory Be to Jesus
 God Works His Purposes in Us
 He Was Wounded For Our Transgressions
 I Am Not My Own
 I Want to Walk As A Child of the Light
 I Worship You, O Lord
 Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise
 In the Bleak Mid-Winter
 Jesus, the Very Thought of You
 Now Greet the Swiftly Changing Year
 Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven
 Thou Who Wast Rich (You Who Were Rich)
 We Rest on Thee, Our Shield and Our Defense

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. Contemplate the three elements of the traditionalist pathway.
2. Read Scripture aloud.
3. Select a Psalm to say every morning and one for each evening; Practice liturgical prayer (see Book of Common Prayer)
4. Set a regular time and place to meet with the Lord each day.
5. Follow the Church calendar and celebrate significant days, e.g. Pentecost, Advent
6. 8. Develop meaningful rituals; Make plentiful use of symbols or ritualized gestures
7. Find areas of sacrifice

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? What would you like them to do for you?
3. What rituals are necessary for you to be able to worship easily?
4. What happens to your ability to worship when you are fellowshipping in a church of a denomination that has little formal liturgy?

RESOURCES

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