

Contemplatives

Loving God through adoration
Being absorbed with God in quiet solitude

I feel closest to God when...

I am quiet and alone, focused only on God's presence.

To be spiritually renewed I need to...

Silently contemplate God's love.

It's especially helpful for me to connect with God through...

Meditating on Scripture or a devotional book that draws me into deeper intimacy with God.

I benefit especially from speakers and authors who help me to...

Love God all the time in the secret place of my heart.



About this Pathway

We can't make ourselves love God but we can prepare the way, remove distractions and make time & space, we can give God our time.

Typical activities of this pathway:

1 Prayers

Using a word or a phrase - resting in the presence of God by focussing on one word eg Jesus, or focussing on the Trinity by using the word Beauty etc. or saying "Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me a sinner" or similar, repeat & reflect

Dance-like prayers – allowing God's spirit to lead, not having a set agenda

2 Secret Acts of Devotion – giving gifts & doing service that only God knows about, no worldly reward.

3 Meditative Bible Reading – reading the bible with your imagination, senses & emotions eg using the Lectio Divina method

Contemplatives in the Bible

Can you think of Bible characters or incidences which show this pathway.

Can you think of Christians you admire who fit this pathway?

Temptations of Contemplatives – read & encourage discussion

- 1. Losing balance**, focussing only on our relationship with God & forgetting healthy relationships with others. God wants us to love the world he has made & love (& serve) other people.
- 2. Meditation that calls us to empty ourselves or be absorbed into God.**
- 3. Remaining in adolescent infatuation** rather than growing with self-discipline & self-sacrifice, we need to move beyond self-absorbed meditation to aligning our will with God's will.
- 4. Growing addicted to spiritual experiences.** Spiritual joys are transient, joyfully & gratefully received but not the purpose of life.

Consider – perhaps in discussion groups

1. Which aspects of the contemplative's path to connecting with God seem most helpful or intriguing to you? Which aspects seem least interesting?
2. Sensing God's deep love for you isn't something you can demand or force. It is a gift from God, a breeze of awareness that blows on your soul. How can you hoist the sails of your heart to capture the breeze and let it propel you into his very presence?
3. Read Song of Songs 5:10-16 an almost embarrassing account of all the things this woman adores about her beloved. Falling in love with God is quickened by taking time to focus on all the things we love and appreciate about God. What does your "love list" for God look like? Write it out on a sheet of paper.
4. How might these "acts of contemplatives" help you grow in this path of adoring God more intentionally? (do a web search for these & other contemplative practices)
the Jesus prayer
secret acts of devotion
dancing prayer
centering prayer
prayer of the heart
stations of the cross
meditative prayer
5. What are the dangers of having a spiritual pathway that feeds off of feelings and spiritual experience? How can contemplatives guard against these dangers?
6. What can someone who doesn't enjoy being alone learn from the contemplatives? What can ? learn from them? Enthusiasts? Caregivers? What can contemplatives learn from the other temperaments?
7. Create some "alone time" with God this week to be still in his presence. Choose one of the acts of the contemplatives, and record your experience.

Clues to seeing Contemplatives in the Bible. Deuteronomy 33:12, Psalm 63

For everyone:

Consider these Spiritual Disciplines

<https://www.soulshpherd.org/spiritual-disciplines-list/>

Solitude, Silence, Fasting, Sabbath, Secrecy, Submission

Bible reading, Worship, Prayer, Fellowship, Personal reflection, Service

Read (to be challenged, comforted, provoked to argument, helped to grow ...)

Richard Foster's Celebration of Discipline

Brother Lawrence's The Practice of The Presence of God

Joel McKerrrow's Woven (an artist remaking the faith he almost lost)

Brian McLaren's Generous Orthodoxy (or for more controversy the more recent A New Kind of Christian)

Henri Nouwen's In the House Of The Lord (an amazing unpacking of a short passage of scripture, you can do a whole term of Home Group studies from this little gem!)

<https://www.follow.org.au> for contemplation in a busy world