

SACRED PATHWAYS – Wk. 1

Where Does Your Heart Come Alive to God?

Naturalist • Sensate



Opening

We all connect with God in different ways. Sometimes we assume there is a “right” way to grow spiritually—quiet time, church attendance, Bible study, small groups—but God has uniquely wired each of us to draw near to Him. The goal isn't simply to discover our pathway; it is to use it to move closer to God and then allow Him to lead us beyond our preferences.

“The pathway isn't the destination. God is.”

Icebreaker

When was the last time you genuinely enjoyed being with God?

What were you doing or where were you when that happened?

1. God Made Us Uniquely

Read James 4:8

“Come near to God and he will come near to you.”

The sermon reminds us that spiritual growth isn't about finding one “one-size-fits-all” strategy. God has created us uniquely—including the ways we naturally experience His presence. The goal is not simply to gain information about ourselves, but to allow that understanding to lead to transformation.

Discussion Questions

1. What are some ways you have been taught that a “good Christian” is supposed to connect with God?
2. Have you ever felt guilty because your spiritual life didn't look like someone else's? Why?
3. How might understanding that God has wired us differently change the way we think about our own spiritual journey?
4. How could it help us better understand someone whose way of connecting with God is very different from ours?

2. NATURALIST

Loving God Through Nature

Read Psalm 8:1, 3–4

The Naturalist encounters God through creation—the beauty, wonder, power, and majesty of the natural world. Scripture repeatedly points us toward creation as a way of recognizing God's glory.

But the sermon also identifies several dangers: using nature to escape people and responsibilities, confusing personal impressions with God's authoritative Word, or allowing appreciation of creation to become worship of creation.

Discussion Questions

1. Where in creation do you most naturally notice God's beauty or presence?
2. What is it about being outdoors that can help you slow down and pay attention to God?
3. When can getting away into nature become an escape rather than a way of drawing closer to God?
4. Why is it important to test what we think God is showing us against Scripture?
5. What is the difference between appreciating creation and worshiping creation?

Personal Reflection

The sermon asked:

“Are you getting outside to experience God, or to escape people?”

How would you answer that question?

This Week

Go outside for 20 minutes without your phone. Read **Psalm 19** and ask:

“What is creation showing me about its Creator?”

3. SENSATE

Loving God Through the Senses

Read Psalm 150:2–6

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The Sensate connects with God through beauty and the senses—music, art, architecture, taste, touch, sight, sound, and other tangible experiences of worship. Psalm 150 gives us a vivid picture of worship involving instruments, movement, sound, and the whole body.

But sensory experiences can become the focus rather than a doorway to God. Worship can become about the music, the emotion, the atmosphere, or the experience itself rather than about the God we are worshipping.

Discussion Questions

1. What aspects of worship most deeply engage you—music, beauty, communion, art, architecture, movement, silence, or something else?
2. Can you remember a time when something you saw, heard, tasted, or experienced helped you become more aware of God?
3. What is the difference between being emotionally moved and genuinely being changed by God?
4. What does it mean to “worship worship” rather than worship God?
5. How can we make sure our worship is connected not only to what we feel, but also to what we believe and how we live?

Personal Reflection

Consider the three questions from the sermon:

- **When you sing, do you believe what you're singing?**
- **When you lift your hands, are you surrendering—or simply participating?**
- **When the music moves you, does your life move with it?**

Which one challenges you the most? Why?

This Week

Choose one worship song and listen to it intentionally. Pay attention to the **words, melody, emotions, and your physical response**. Then ask:

“Am I simply experiencing worship, or am I actually worshipping God?”

4. THE DANGER OF MAKING OUR PATHWAY THE DESTINATION

One of the most important ideas from the sermon is that our natural pathway is a **doorway**, not a destination. A Naturalist still needs the gathered church. A Sensate still needs times of rest and under stimulation.

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Our preferences can help us draw near to God, but they can also become limitations if we refuse to follow God outside of what feels natural.

Discussion Questions

1. Why might we be tempted to turn our preferred way of experiencing God into the “right” way?
2. What could happen if we only practiced spiritual disciplines that we naturally enjoyed?
3. What might God want to teach us through a spiritual practice that doesn't come naturally to us?
4. How can we appreciate someone else's pathway without assuming it should be our own?

“It’s not good or bad. It’s just different.”

How might this attitude change the way you view someone who worships, prays, or connects with God differently than you do?

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

The goal of this series isn't simply to identify your pathway. It's to **walk it**.

Ask Yourself: Where does my heart naturally come alive to God?

Maybe it's:

- Being outside
- Music and worship
- Silence
- Serving
- Study
- Community
- Something else

Then ask:

What am I going to do about it?

One Step This Week

Choose **one intentional practice** that helps you draw near to God.

Don't simply learn about your pathway.

Walk it.