

A conceptual image showing two hands, one from the top and one from the bottom, reaching towards a central bright light source. The light creates a starburst effect with numerous radiating lines extending outwards. The background is dark blue.

ENCOUNTERING GOD

3. APPRECIATE EACH PATHWAY

ICEBREAKER

If this is a new group or there are new people, please take a moment to **introduce yourselves**.



To start off your small group, briefly share your response to the following question:

What is your *least* favorite pizza topping?

Share with your group.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Let's get a big picture of what we'll be learning today...

What's the best way to encounter God? For some it's gathering with a group of people through worship. For others it's through nature and/or having time alone to get refreshed. And yet there are others who would rather dive into an in-depth study of the bible as their way of drawing close to God. No one pathway is better than the others, but each one is equally important. And you will likely have more than one way to connect with God. This study will highlight two more spiritual pathways and you will not only see which one (s) work best for you, but also how to encounter God in any and all situations while learning to appreciate each unique pathway.



TIPS TO A SUCCESSFUL SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Tip: BE REAL, AUTHENTIC, & TRANSPARENT ABOUT

WEAKNESSES & STRUGGLES. Some people in your group who may be new to faith or new to small group often think there's a *right* way to answer discussion questions—or at least a few *wrong* things to say. So, they show up and listen in, but don't feel permission to say what's really on their minds. Set examples by sharing honest vulnerable answers. Sharing with a level of vulnerability sets the tone and gives permission for everyone—regardless of spiritual maturity—to respond authentically.

Tip: NO GUILT, NO SHAME. This series is not meant to guilt or shame anyone into doing anything.

ONLINE Tip: HYBRID GATHERING (ZOOM &/OR IN PERSON). If you're meeting together on Zoom, familiarize yourself with the Zoom features on your electronic device. It is helpful for everyone to know where the mute button is located. Ask the attendees to self-mute to avoid environmental noise when someone else is talking & sharing. Doing this will help with the flow of your SG discussion time. If your group decides to meet in person, please practice safe social distancing by following the guidelines of being 6 feet apart and wearing a mask.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1.) As we continue looking at each pathway, let's look at two more today. The first is the "*Activist Pathway*." Here are some details about this one:

"The Activist Pathway"

Finding new ways to share their faith is what gets them going. They love starting up new ministries, traveling to different countries, or coming up with new ways to share God's mercy to a hurting world. Because of their wiring they need - actually they revel in a - highly challenging environment that pushes them to the absolute edge of their potential. It's when they are right on the edge that they feel closest to God.

In the Bible, Nehemiah was definitely on the activist pathway. When he heard about the destruction of the walls in Jerusalem, he couldn't help himself! He had to act.

When I heard this, I sat down and wept. In fact, for days I mourned, fasted, and prayed to the God of heaven.
Nehemiah 1:4 (NLT)

What is a passion or yours, or an injustice that gets you worked up? How can that intense desire to do something about it connect you to God more closely?

2.) Another pathway that is sometimes connected to this one is the **"Contemplative Pathway."** Take a look.

"The Contemplative Pathway"

On the other hand, these people would rather sit and think. They have very deep and wise things to say, as well. They also enjoy solitude and quiet. These sincere Christians are carefully guarding their schedules, avoiding at all costs the patterns of busyness they see around them.

When contemplatives encounter God, they come away with something amazing. It may take a while, and they don't always like to mix with crowds. But they can produce some of the greatest wisdom, not just for their own lives but for their close friends and family.

One day, Jesus was at His friends' house, Lazarus, Mary, and Martha. While Martha was busy with cooking and cleaning, Mary was just quietly listening to Jesus at His feet. Martha got upset and asked Jesus to tell her to come help! Instead, Jesus told her that Mary's pathway led her to contemplate the things of God:

"Mary has chosen what is better, and it is not to be taken away from her."

Luke 10:42 (ISV)

How do you feel when someone doesn't like the way you encounter God? Maybe they say something about it, or criticize your choice. How might you respond to their criticism?

3.) When we stop appreciating each pathway, it is probably due to either envy or arrogance. Maybe we see how someone else encounters God easily and we want that. Or, we think someone else's pathway isn't as good as one of our own. The Bible tells us that we are each different, just like the parts of the body are different.

If the foot says, "I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand," that does not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything?

1 Corinthians 12:15, 17 (NLT)

Knowing your own individual tendencies can help you not only see how you fit in but appreciate how others fit in as well.

What are some things that you have to offer your church and circle of friends that are uniquely yours?

4.) As you learn to grow through your own particular Spiritual Pathway, you will start to notice others on their own journey. Maybe you already thought of someone else while reading through the descriptions. Or perhaps you noticed a friend encountering God in their own way.

This can be a great way to appreciate each pathway, but it can also be a temptation to get off focus. It could be easy to compare, but the truth is we are all on our own journey with different goals and different results. But we all share the same aim, to know God more deeply.

Take a look at these statements which are *NOT* appropriate responses to the Spiritual Pathways:

“Those on the Intellectual Pathway always think they are so smart and better than anyone else.”

“Those who like the Creation Pathway always lack real depth in how they read their Bible.”

What are some reasons that these statements are inappropriate when looking at Spiritual Pathways? (Example, they are stereotypes and everyone’s walk with God is unique and personal. Using the words “always” or “never” can pigeonhole people or these statements assume the worst instead of the best of others)

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

This week, as you continue to grow in your own Spiritual Pathway, think about the areas and ways that are not natural to you.

- *Appreciate that you have a unique place in the Body of Christ.*

- *Appreciate those who have a different approach to connecting with God.*

- *Appreciate how all of you work together for a common goal.*



CLOSE IN PRAYER

Take a few minutes to close your time together with prayer and to pray for each other's prayer requests. Below is a sample prayer to read if you choose to. You can also choose to write down each other's prayer requests to remember throughout the week.



Sample Prayer:

"Father, thank You for placing each of us in our own unique way in your Body. We know that each of us brings a special something to each gathering, and we are only our best when we are together. Some of us love to get moving and start something new, while others of us like to sit back in Your presence and just learn. Help us understand and appreciate each person's uniqueness and honor one another in love. In Jesus' name we pray, amen!"

Group Prayer Requests:

Name

Request

SCRIPTURE...

Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other.

Romans 12:10 (NLT)

OBSERVATION...

APPLICATION...

PRAYER...

SCRIPTURE...

For just as the body is one and has many parts, and all the parts of that body, though many, are one body—so also is Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:12 (CSB)

OBSERVATION...

APPLICATION...

PRAYER...

DAILY DEVOTIONS: DAY 3

SCRIPTURE...

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.

Philippians 2:5 (NIV)

OBSERVATION...

APPLICATION...

PRAYER...

DAILY DEVOTIONS: DAY 4

SCRIPTURE...

Faith in Christ Jesus is what makes each of you equal with each other, whether you are a Jew or a Greek, a slave or a free person, a man or a woman.

Galatians 3:28 (CEV)

OBSERVATION...

APPLICATION...

PRAYER...

SCRIPTURE...

Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble. Likewise, two people lying close together can keep each other warm. But how can one be warm alone? A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (NLT)

OBSERVATION...

APPLICATION...

PRAYER...
