

Greater **Sydney** Conference

Growing in **Discipleship**

Connecting
Serving
Worshiping
Sharing
Growing



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Connecting With God – Process Tool

Your Unique Connection With God

God seeks a unique connection with each of us and there are as many different ways to connect with God as there are people. However there are some general ways these connections work. A spiritual pathway is the way we most naturally connect with God and grow spiritually. The main pathways are:

- **Intellectual**
- **Relational**
- **Serving**
- **Worship**
- **Contemplative**
- **Creation**

Most people connect with God best through at least one or two of these main pathways and there is usually at least one pathway that is very unnatural for us.

While we must shape our life around heart-building habits that connect us with God we must also recognise the opportunities to extend ourselves in our relationship with God in the areas that are not our natural pathways.

Intellectual

There is nothing more calculated to strengthen the intellect than the study of the Scriptures. No other book is so potent to elevate the thoughts, to give vigor to the faculties, as the broad, ennobling truths of the Bible. If God's word were studied as it should be, men would have a breath of mind, a nobility of character, and a stability of purpose rarely seen in these times. STC 90

Characteristics

You draw close to God as you're able to learn more about him.

The study of theology comes naturally. However at times you have little patience for emotional approaches to faith.

You are a thinker

Biblical Example:

Paul

Grow:

Read great books that challenge you.

Expose yourself to lots of teaching.

Find like minded people with whom you can learn.

Cautions:

Guard against becoming all head and no heart

"One of the hardest things in the world is to be right and not to hurt anybody with it." Dallas Willard

Don't confuse being smart with being spiritually mature.

Ways to Stretch:

Devote your self to corporate worship and to private adoration and prayer.
Engage in self-examination to assess whether or not you are being loving.

Relational

Let your conversation be of Him who liveth to make intercession for you before the Father. When you take the hand of a friend, let praise to God be on your lips and in your heart. This will attract his thought to Jesus. STC 119

Characteristics

Spiritual growth comes most naturally when you're involved in significant relationships.

Small groups and other community life experiences are the key.

Your life is an open book.

Being alone can drive you crazy.

In key times of growth, God will often speak to you through people.

Biblical Example:

Peter

Strengths:

You need a relationally rich life

Pray with others in community

Learn with other people – in a small group

Use your network of contacts to further God's kingdom

Cautions:

Guard against superficiality

You can grow too reliant on others and become a spiritual chameleon.

Ways to Stretch:

Keep some of your experiences with God secret so that you don't become addicted to what other people think.

Study Scripture for yourself so you are grounded in God's Word rather than in others' opinions

Invite close friends to speak truth to you so that your relationship is more than just social.

Serving

The spirit of unselfish labor for others gives depth, stability, and Christlike loveliness to the character, and bring peace and happiness to its possessor...Those who thus exercise the Christian graces will grow and become strong to work for God. (STC, 80)

Characteristics

God's presence seems most tangible when you're involved in helping others

You're often uncomfortable in a setting where you don't have a role.

If you have a role, then you sense God's presence and delight.
You constantly look for acts of service you can engage in and often don't even need to be asked.

Biblical Example:

Dorcas

Strengths:

Get plugged into a church body so you have opportunities for meaningful service to offer God.

Look for glimpses of God's presence in the people you serve and in the execution of your tasks.

Prepare to serve first by praying so your service is genuinely spiritual service.

Cautions:

Be careful not to resent other people who don't serve as much as you do.

Remember that God loves you, not because you are so faithful in serving him, but because you are his child.

Don't confuse serving with earning God's love.

Ways to Stretch:

Balance your service with small group and community life.

Learn how to receive love even when you're not being productive

Practise expressing love through words as well as actions.

Worshipping

The soul redeemed and cleansed from sin, with all its noble powers dedicated to the service of God, is of surpassing worth; and there is joy in heaven in the presence of God and the holy angels over one soul redeemed, a joy that is expressed in songs of holy triumph. STC 126

Characteristics

You have a deep love of corporate praise and a natural inclination toward celebration

In difficult periods of life, worship is one of the most healing activities you engage in.

In worship, your heart opens up and you come alive and enthusiastically participate.

Biblical Example:

Miriam

Strengths:

Experience great worship on a regular basis

Use worship DVD's or CDs and make your car/room a private sanctuary.

Learn about other worship traditions and incorporate what you learn into your personal worship time.

Cautions:

Be careful not to judge those who aren't as expressive in worship.

Guard against an experience-based spirituality that always has you looking for the next worship "high".

"The danger in finding a way to God is that people grow to love the way more than they love God." Meister Eckhart

Ways to Stretch:

Engage in the discipline of solitude

Serve God in concrete ways as an extension of your worship.

Remain committed to your church even when worship isn't all you would like it to be.

Contemplative

As we meditate upon the perfections of the Saviour, we shall desire to be wholly transformed and renewed in the image of His purity. There will be a hungering and thirsting of soul to become like Him whom we adore. The more our thoughts are upon Christ, the more we shall speak of Him to others and represent Him to the world. STC 89

Characteristics

You love uninterrupted solitude

Reflection comes naturally to you.

You have a large capacity for prayer.

If you get busy or spend a lot of time with people, you feel drained and yearn for times of solitude.

Biblical Example:

Mary, Martha's sister

Strengths:

You need regular, protected, intense time of solitude and stillness.

Act on what you hear from God in the silence

Cautions:

You have a tendency to avoid the demands of the real world because it doesn't live up to your ideals.

Be careful not to retreat to your inner world when friends, family or society disappoint you.

Resist the temptation to consider your times of private prayer and solitude as less important than the more public acts of ministry performed by others.

Ways to Stretch:

Choose a regular place of active service.

Stay relationally connected, even when those relationships become difficult or challenging.

Connect with those who have a service pathway

-Pray for them

-Get involved in some aspect of their ministry activity.

Creation

Our Saviour bound up His precious lessons with the things of nature. The trees, the birds, the flowers of the valleys, the hills, the lakes, and the beautiful heavens, as well as the incidents and surroundings of daily life, were all linked with the words of truth, that His lessons might thus be often recalled to mind. STC 85

Characteristics

You respond deeply to God through your experience of creation.

Being outdoors replenishes you.

You're highly aware of your physical senses.

You tend to be creative.

Biblical Example:

King David

Strengths:

Find a location for getaways.

Make beauty a part of your spiritual life.

Cautions:

You may be tempted to use beauty or nature to escape.

You will find that people are sometimes disappointing.

Guard against the temptation to avoid corporate worship because you think to yourself, "I can worship God in nature, on my own."

Ways to Stretch:

Stay involved in a worshiping community.

Be willing to help out in less-than-beautiful settings.

Take Scripture with you into nature, and meditate on God's Word as you enjoy his creation.

- When do you feel closest to God?
- What area would be good for you to extend yourself in?

Adapted from John Ortberg and Haley Barton, *An Ordinary Day With Jesus*, Zondervan, 2001 and Gary Thomas, *Sacred Pathways*, Zondervan, 2000

Growing in Discipleship

Personal Process Tool

Spiritual health is all about having Christ's character formed in you. It's not how much you know but rather your continued growth in living the way God designed you. Knowledge is useful only if it transforms you into a person with a greater love for God and people.

This tool is designed to get you thinking intentionally about your spiritual health. You can never really measure spiritual health however at the same time this tool might get you thinking about some practices that will allow Christ to 'dwell richly in you'. Remember your salvation is purely by the grace of God. However, in living the life God designed you for and growing in His likeness, you will allow God to shape your life in ways that allow Him to powerfully work in and through you.

Who is responsible for your spiritual growth?

You are. While being part of a church community is vital and seminars are valuable, you cannot leave the responsibility for your spiritual growth to anyone else. It's your life, so **you** need to put in place plans that grow you in your connection with God.

God Created You for a Unique Relationship

Because each of us is different, with different spiritual pathways and at different life stages, a one plan fits all approach does not work. However, there are some basic foundations for spiritual growth that apply to all of us. This process tool aims to help you put in place some steps that work for you.

This tool is based on the belief that spiritual growth:

- is a gradual, ongoing, process
- happens differently for each person
- involves developing heart building habits
- requires participation in all 5 discipleship purposes to achieve balance

Five Key Areas - Tool

Step 1: Take a moment to answer the following questions. Circle the first answer that comes to mind. Note: This is your personal check and the results will not be collected or shared unless you choose to do so with a trusted friend/mentor

- 5 = This is exactly me
- 4 = This is mostly me
- 3 = Sometimes me
- 2 = Mostly not me
- 1 = Definitely not me

Growing in Understanding God's word

		Not me				Me
1	I put aside time each day to invite Jesus to be involved in my day and to reflect on how my day with God went and thank Him for being there	1	2	3	4	5
2	I am quick to confess anything in my character that does not look like Christ	1	2	3	4	5
3	I have people who hold me accountable for my spiritual growth	1	2	3	4	5
4	I ensure that my physical well-being is such that I can focus on God	1	2	3	4	5
5	I am consistent in pursuing habits that are helping me model my life after Jesus	1	2	3	4	5
6	I am honoring God with my finances, time and abilities and my first fruit giving of these to God	1	2	3	4	5
7	I avoid using addictive behaviours (television, busyness, substances etc) that crowd out my spiritual growth	1	2	3	4	5
8	I allow God's word to guide my thoughts and change my actions	1	2	3	4	5
9	I am able to praise God during difficult times and see them as opportunities to grow	1	2	3	4	5
10	I have found that prayer has changed how I view and interact with the world	1	2	3	4	5

Growing Total

Serving

1	I sense the unique gifts and passions God has given me and am actively using my spiritual gifts for his service	1	2	3	4	5
2	I know the area of service that energises me and I serve in it	1	2	3	4	5
3	I am regularly serving in a ministry to the church body	1	2	3	4	5
4	I regularly reflect on how my life can have an impact for the Kingdom of God	1	2	3	4	5
5	I have dedicated all that I have and am to God	1	2	3	4	5
6	I enjoy meeting the needs of others without expecting anything in return	1	2	3	4	5
7	I volunteer time in community service	1	2	3	4	5
8	Those closest to me would say my life is a reflection of giving more than receiving	1	2	3	4	5
9	I see my painful experiences as opportunities to minister to others	1	2	3	4	5
10	I am quick to support and encourage other people in their ministry areas	1	2	3	4	5

Serving Total

Sharing

1	I look for opportunities to build genuine relationships with people who do not know God	1	2	3	4	5
2	I am confident in my ability to share my faith	1	2	3	4	5

3	I willingly share Jesus with people	1	2	3	4	5
4	I invite people to attend my church and share my story with them	1	2	3	4	5
5	I introduce people to those who can help them at a particular stage in their spiritual journey	1	2	3	4	5
6	I pray specifically and regularly for my unchurched friends to come to know God and for opportunities to share my faith with them	1	2	3	4	5
7	I consistently integrate my faith in the marketplace and world	1	2	3	4	5
8	I help other people grow in understanding God's word and what He wants to do in and through them.	1	2	3	4	5
9	People close to me would describe me as a responsive listener	1	2	3	4	5
10	I find that my relationship with Jesus comes up frequently in my conversations with those who don't know him	1	2	3	4	5

Sharing Total

Connecting

1	I am intentionally developing deep and meaningful relationships with Christian friends and mentors	1	2	3	4	5
2	I am cultivating authentic community by speaking the truth in love and creating healthy boundaries	1	2	3	4	5
3	I am more loving, grace giving and forgiving than I was twelve months ago	1	2	3	4	5
4	I genuinely connect with my immediate family (parents, siblings, children, spouse)	1	2	3	4	5
5	I resolve conflict with others in a Biblical manner	1	2	3	4	5
6	I regularly use my time and resources to care for the needs of others	1	2	3	4	5
7	I am honest with myself (and a few significant others) about the feelings, beliefs, doubts, pains and hurts beneath the surface of my life	1	2	3	4	5
8	I gather regularly with a group of Christians for fellowship and accountability	1	2	3	4	5
9	I have an easy time receiving advice, encouragement, and correction from others	1	2	3	4	5
10	There is nothing in the way I talk or act concerning others that I would not be willing to share with them in person	1	2	3	4	5

Connecting Total

Worshipping

1	The way I live my life shows that God is my highest priority	1	2	3	4	5
2	My thoughts actions and feelings are a daily expression of worship to and dependence on God	1	2	3	4	5
3	I am not afraid to worship God from the core of my being. Worship is an expression of my feelings for God based on my knowledge of Him	1	2	3	4	5
4	I regularly meditate on God's word and invite him into my everyday activities	1	2	3	4	5

5	There is nothing in my life that I have not surrendered to God	1	2	3	4	5
6	I am honoring God with every dimension of my life by balancing His purpose in my life	1	2	3	4	5
7	I am faithfully attending church worship services	1	2	3	4	5
8	I am growing in my personal worship to God through music and praise	1	2	3	4	5
9	I love to worship God by myself as well as with others	1	2	3	4	5
10	I have a deep desire to spend time in God's presence	1	2	3	4	5

Worshipping Total _____

Step 2: Enter your scores in the Table below for each of the five growth areas. Don't be discouraged if you're 'Just Beginning' in some areas. Remember, spiritual growth is a journey and doesn't happen by accident.

Growing	Serving	Sharing	Connecting	Worshipping

Then for **each area** use the following scale as a guide

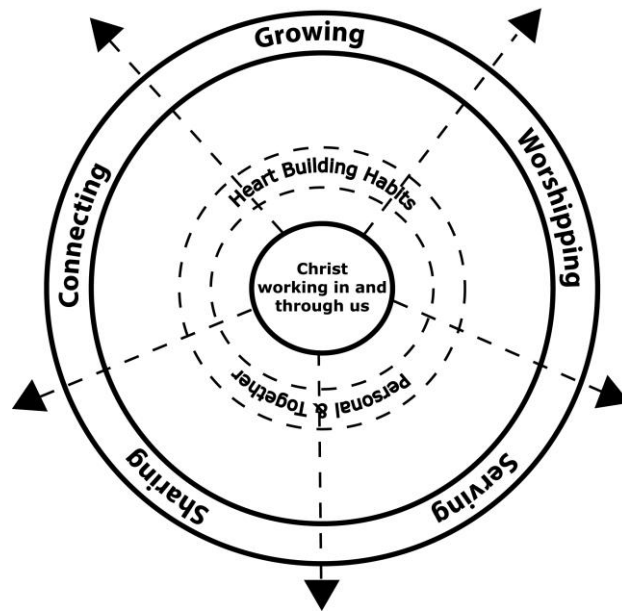
Just Beginning 0-10	Needs more intentionality 11-20	Getting Going 21-30	Happening Well 31-40	Well Developed 41-50
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Optional Extra: Have your spouse, group leader, parent(s) and/or Christian friend fill out a copy of this form based on you.

Step 3: Colour your scores for each area onto the grid below. (Use the broken arrow lines as a guide in increments of ten). This gives you a picture of how balanced your discipleship growth currently is and will allow you to see what areas you might focus on to move toward an even circle.

Discipleship Framework

Growing Toward Maturity in Christ



What Does it All Mean?

- If you scored high on the Growing in God's word factor then you already have some significant heart building habits in place that should impact the other areas. In this case, you would be best served by working on the factor you scored lowest in. If serving was one of the lower factors then perhaps this would be a great starting point as it can effectively engender relationships and an outward focus in terms of faith sharing.
- If Growing in God's word was amongst your lower scores then this would be the place to particularly focus energy as this factor is the most likely to engender a heart that responds in worship, serving, sharing and connecting in authentic relationships.
- If you scored high on relationships but low on serving and sharing then put the emphasis on growing in God's word and serving.
- In reality you will need to work to some extent in all five areas at the same time however this assessment gives you a guide for where to put your initial energy.

Step 4: My Heart Building Habits – Spiritual Pathways

Now that we have identified your possible key areas to grow in what heart-building habits might allow you to do this best? A spiritual pathway is the way we most naturally connect with God and grow spiritually. You are wired up in a unique way for connection with God. When we have an idea of how we are wired we can choose habits that are our natural fit and perhaps other habits that we know will stretch us.

The main pathways are:

- Intellectual
- Relational
- Serving
- Worship
- Contemplative
- Creation

Most people connect with God best through at least one or two of these main pathways and there is usually at least one pathway that is very unnatural for us.

Take a moment to answer the following questions. Circle the first answer that comes to mind.

5 = This is exactly me

4 = This is mostly me

3 = Sometimes me

2 = Mostly not me

1 = Definitely not me

Relational

		Not Me			Me		
1	When I have a problem I would rather pray with people than alone.	1	2	3	4	5	
2	It makes me feel better about myself to hang out with people I know and like.	1	2	3	4	5	
3	I don't understand why people have a hard time revealing personal things about themselves.	1	2	3	4	5	
4	When I'm tired, there's nothing like going out with friends to refresh me.	1	2	3	4	5	
5	People around me describe me as a 'people person'.	1	2	3	4	5	

Relational Total

Intellectual

1	In a church service, I mostly look forward to the preaching.	1	2	3	4	5	
2	I've never understood why people don't love to study the Bible in depth.	1	2	3	4	5	
3	People seek me out when they need answers to Biblical questions.	1	2	3	4	5	
4	When I need to be refreshed a stimulating book is just the thing.	1	2	3	4	5	
5	I often read lots of books/articles to help me work through a problem.	1	2	3	4	5	

Intellectual Total

Worship (through music)

1	Even when I'm tired, I look forward to joining in the worship service	1	2	3	4	5	
2	I am happiest when I praise God together with others	1	2	3	4	5	
3	I like how all the world's problems – including mine – seem to diminish when I'm praising God in the worship service	1	2	3	4	5	
4	I love singing along with worship songs when I'm driving	1	2	3	4	5	
5	I often catch myself singing worship songs to myself	1	2	3	4	5	

Worship Total

Serving

- | | | | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | No matter how tired I get, I usually come alive when a challenge is placed before me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2 | Helping others is easy for me, even when I have problems. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3 | I get tremendous satisfaction from seeing people work together to achieve a goal. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4 | I am happiest when I find someone who really needs help and I step in and offer it. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5 | I should probably take more time to slow down, but I really love what I do, especially ministry. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Serving Total _____

Contemplative

- | | | | | | | |
|---|--|-----|---|---|---|------|
| | | Low | | | | High |
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1 | I experience a deep inner joy when I am in a quiet place, free from distractions. | | | | | |
| 2 | I don't understand how Christians can be so busy and still think they're hearing from God. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3 | When I face a difficulty, being alone feels most helpful. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4 | My family and friends sometimes tease me about being a hermit. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5 | After being around people, I really need to be alone to think. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Intellectual Total _____

Creation

- | | | | | | | |
|---|---|-----|---|---|---|------|
| | | Low | | | | High |
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1 | A beautiful sunset can give me a spiritual feeling that temporarily blocks out everything bothering me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2 | When faced with a difficult decision I am drawn to walk in the bush or on the beach | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3 | Things in nature often teach me valuable things about God | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4 | God is real when I am in beautiful natural settings | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5 | When I see natural beauty, something wonderful stirs in me that is difficult to describe. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Creation Total _____

Relational	Intellectual	Worship	Serving	Contemplative	Creation

Step 5:

In the third column of your Spiritual Health Plan, list the actions that you have decided, based on your pathways, to work on. Remember, be realistic in your expectations as its easy to become discouraged. Check back often, evaluate and readjust for your next step.

My Plan

After completing the *Assessment Tool*, focus on the areas where you feel you need to plan for growth and complete this *Health Plan*. Based on your 'spiritual pathways' fill in the possible ideas for developing your spiritual life in each area, then translate those possibilities into actual steps you plan to take to grow or develop in each purpose. Share your plan with your spiritual partner, then check on your progress periodically.

Purpose	Possibilities	Plans
Connecting How can I deepen my relationship with others? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family/Friends • Relational/Emotional • Small Group Community 		
Growing How can I understand and apply God's word? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biblical Understanding • Application of Scripture 		
Worshipping How can I live for God's pleasure? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular church attendance • Personal Worship and devotionals • Stewardship of time, health, talents and treasure 		
Serving How can I serve God and others <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry to the church body • Serving in my home and community • 		
Sharing How can I share my faith regularly? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission to the world • Friends/family, work, neighborhood involvement 	•	

The Discipleship department at the conference has a wide range of resources to help you in your spiritual growth plans. Feel free to contact the department to find out about what resources might be useful for your next step PH: 9868 6522 email brendanpratt@adventist.org.au