

Access Points for Prayer—"Sacred Pathways"

As Catholics, we hold firm to the fact that God is constantly seeking us out with an over-the-top love that is awash throughout all of creation. Trinitarian theology tells us that all things, everywhere, are rich with the outpouring of this love. The grace of our Seeking God is available through endless modes, moments, portals, and experiences.



As images of God and blessed with free will, it's up to us to *choose to be found* by noticing the graces and opportunities saturating every moment, interaction, and opportunity.

How can we talk about these intangible graces in concrete, tangible ways so as to guide teens (and our children, our spouses, our friends, ourselves) towards discovering and being discovered by God?

[Sticky Faith](#) offers a great overview of Gary Thomas's Sacred Pathways, nine access points through which human hearts and minds find God. For example, some of us are thinkers, some are doers, and some are sensates. It is through these preferences that we most often sense ourselves being 'found.' Thomas has created a really nice connection between our spiritual side, Multiple Intelligence Theory, and the necessity of building numerous access points into prayer prompts and session plans *with everyone*, not just teens. Others have streamlined Thomas's work to a more usable seven access points:

Relational: I connect best to God when I am with others.

Intellectual: I connect best to God when I learn about God, creation, physics, etc.

Worship: I connect best to God when I worship.

Activist: I connect best to God when doing great things.

Contemplative: I connect best to God in silence.

Serving: I connect best to God while completing Kingdom tasks.

Creation: I connect best to God in nature.

One of the great strengths of this hybrid approach is the [Spiritual Pathway Assessment](#), a tool for helping all of us identify the access points that are the richest fodder for our faith journeys. It's by far the best tool I've come across for helping teens and adults alike recognize the potential access points to transformational prayer that God has built into them. I've used this on Kairos retreats with Juniors and it's been an awesome addition. Why?

1. Most everyone loves a self-quiz. Especially teenagers.
2. Teens really are hungry for something more and something that matters. The mere idea that we can help them get closer to that something creates curiosity, interest, and hope. They dive into the inventory.
3. The assessment works. Most everyone walks away with either clarity or affirmation about their access points. Moreover, the assessment rings true to their experience.
4. The [debriefing tool at this link](#) offers clear characteristics, examples, strengths, cautions, and ways to stretch for each type. In other words, the assessment offers to take them further along the PATH, if they are willing to put in the effort and continue the journey.
5. Follow up conversations can lead to post-retreat goodness. For example:

"Servers" find each other and the synergy of conversation and passion can spawn a service club at school.

'Aha' moments happen all the time when two heretofore mere classmates realize they share a really deep

intellectual desire to understand a church teaching.

An idea for a 'Camping Kairos' bubbles up from the creation seekers.

Take the assessment yourself. See if it rings true for you, too