



CONVERSATIONS GUIDE

BY KIM ENGELMANN



SACRED PATHWAYS

GARY THOMAS



Thomas helps the reader to see that there are many styles to the devotional life that allow someone to grow close to God. It is important that we understand this so that we do not feel that we are caught in a mold that is antithetical to who we are. The quiet time in a closed room may not be for everyone. Thomas outlines some definite “types” and validates new venues for experiencing the presence of God and growing spiritually. Thomas helps us to see that most of us are a combination of all these ways of knowing God. Our task is to affirm the creative way in which we were made and seek God in the way that fits us best.

1. Of the different types Thomas describes, which one do you identify with most?
2. Have you felt free to connect with God in new ways that might not fit the mold of how other people may do it? If so, share a time when you did this.
3. Do you think the list above is complete? Can you think of other ways that bring God close to a person? How many might there be?

ACTS OF INCARNATION

DALLAS WILLARD



Dallas begins this article outlining four ongoing themes throughout Scripture: 1. God loves people and has prepared a suitable dwelling place both as an inheritance and a place of being together; 2. God desires to be with his people in loving relationship; 3. Humanity continues to reject both the inheritance and the offer of presence and relationship; and 4. God does not give up on the offer to be with the ones he loves. The covenant that God sets up indicates his desire for relationship.

In the Old Testament God is *for* his people, while in the New Testament God is *with* his people through Jesus. Then the preposition again changes to *in* [his people] with the coming of the Holy Spirit. In essence, as Dallas suggests, “God can animate us.” By the Holy Spirit, he now lives within us.

So Dallas begins asking whether we can and should appreciate the

book of Acts in contemporary church life. We are called and created to be responsible under the reign of the Kingdom of God as described in Genesis. Dallas defines the Kingdom of God as “God in action.” The primary way we know the Kingdom of God is through his action with us.

How is God in action in the book of Acts? Dallas contends that the book of Acts is not simply about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is far more about God reorganizing people under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The root change is transformation of character, not institutional protocol. This allows for a true community of people who genuinely love each other, and this is where eternal life begins *now*. The message of Acts is “salvation,” which for Dallas amounts to trusting Jesus.

Dallas unpacks salvation and emphasizes that it is not simply the removal from guilt. This has been the emphasis of the church today. Rather it is also breaking the power of wrongdoing in my life. This is the “double cure” mentioned in the old hymn “Rock of Ages.”

1. How do you see God in action today? Would you say that this is akin to the Kingdom of God?
2. Have you experienced religious institutions as oppressive? If so, how?
3. Do you agree with the statement: “we are to be witnesses to the Kingdom wherever we are”?
4. How do you normally witness to the Kingdom of God in your daily life?
5. What about the movement from God being *for* us, to being *with* us, to being *in* us illustrates God’s ultimate plan? How might this lend itself to the transformation of character?
6. Have you experienced that “preposition transition” in your own life? How have you experienced God being *for* you, *with* you, and *in* you?



In this article Webb talks about the rhythm of our lives and how important it is not only to engage in regular disciplines of prayer and fasting, but also to consider the broader pictures of our lives with God. He talks about this in terms of the Latin phrase *regula vitae*—a rule for life—which is a gift, not a burden. The rule of life is meant to help us live the way that Jesus lived. Webb invites us to write down what we do each day, each month, and each year to get a picture of our lives and to take a realistic look at it. Then he asks us to make six headings representing the Six Streams of Foster’s “with-God life”—Contemplative, Holiness, Charismatic, Social Justice, Evangelical, and Incarnational. Under each heading we commit to doing something that reflects and grows us in this direction each day. The commitment is to be simple and something we can succeed at. Webb challenges the reader to give these streams a try in our daily life and then in six months compare the streams list with the original list of what we do each day with its “out of balance” continuum.

1. Do you feel that your life is out of balance?
2. Do you have a regular rhythm of practicing the spiritual life? If so, how do you do this?
3. How does establishing a spiritual rhythm and balance to life interface with God’s creativity that often is surprising and jolts us out of our routine?
4. What does your “rule of life” reveal about you? Does it reveal what God might be teaching you during a particular season?

What is the Kingdom of God? It is God in action. We talk about it as a “reign.” It is God in action. God is acting in many, many ways. His Kingdom is present wherever what he wants done is done. But don’t think about that abstractly; the Kingdom is about right here, right now.

SEVERAL FORMS OF
CHRISTIANS IN THE
SCHOOL OF CHRIST:
HOW DIVERSITY IN THE
CHURCH LEADS US DEEPER
WHERE WE ARE

J. BRENT BILL



The author begins his article by explaining that he has many friends from different denominations and faith traditions. Not all believe exactly the same, but in the diversity among them there is a richness that develops if people are able to listen to one another with a nonjudgmental posture and learn from one another. As a Quaker who spurns liturgy, he has grown to appreciate the Book of Common Prayer from his friend who is an Episcopal priest. He highlights the understanding that Jews have called “*tikkun olam*”—which means “repairing the world”—

the responsibility we have to work with God to heal and transform this world. This partnership with God for the healing of the world was an inspiring and motivational concept. The author emphasizes the importance of learning from one another and being open to the wide spectrum of faith traditions that are present in our world, making friends within those traditions and learning from them. If we insist on staying within our own tradition, this can cause us to remain truncated, myopic, and less aware of the many facets of faith born out of a richness that history beckons us to explore

1. What friends do you have who are from other faith traditions than your own? What, if anything, do you appreciate about how they do things?
2. How might you expose yourself in greater depth to those ways of worshiping God that are different than yours?
3. Do you think we can grow deeper in our faith by honoring and participating in faith traditions that do not recognize Jesus Christ as Lord? Why or why not?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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A Walk With God Through Friendship, and three children’s books entitled the *Joona Trilogy*.