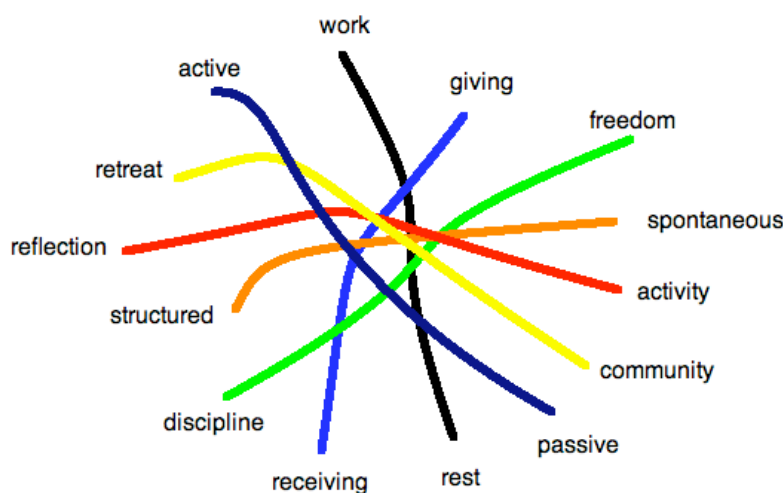


GETTING STARTED (OR RE-STARTED) WITH GOD

On one hand, this idea of “walking with God” can seem pretty intuitive: pray, read the Bible, talk with a friend.... But once you’ve been “around the block” a few times, it can get a little confusing: there are so many approaches and so much teaching on the topic. Before I share my own ideas, here are two short assignments:

- Make a list, or just think about, things that have worked for you in the past. Think about times when have you felt especially close to God, learned some deep lessons from God or feel you really grew as a person. Was it in a group Bible study? Alone somewhere? Through a service project or helping somebody? Looking at the picture below, do you notice any patterns: are most of your good experiences structured, spontaneous, reflective, active...?
- Now, think about (or make a list) of all the ways you have been *taught* to connect with God. What patterns do you see in these ideas that other people have shared with you? (Most people report being taught ways that are mostly structured, private and reflective.) Of all the ways you have been taught, how many are on your list of things that really worked? How many have never really worked for you?



Here is my advice.

- For most of your life, build on your strengths. If, for example, you are active, outgoing and emotional, don’t spend all or most of your efforts trying to sit quietly, following a highly structured plan and thinking by yourself. Instead, go outside, bring a friend if you can and talk about what you’re thinking or feeling about God. When you’re done, read the Bible for a little while, or maybe read for a few minutes before you go.
- If you are just getting started, no matter what your personality is, most people find a little structure really helps. Find a friend, find a plan and stick to it long enough to build some good habits.¹ If you are a structured person, you might be following this plan the rest of your life! But if that is not who God has made you to be, eventually, you will have to flex.²
- If you need a fresh start, doing the opposite of what comes “natural” can give just the right jolt. For example, I’m pretty flexible, I like to talk about what I’m learning and I generally pursue the questions that come up in my life or my friends’ life.³ But whenever I get lost or feel out of touch with God, I pick something pretty intentional, private and structured to do for a while. My wife is just the opposite: she’s more structured, disciplined and thoughtful, so when her faith seems a bit flat, she likes to get away, relax and see what happens.
- Finally, think about the things that are already part of your life: your commute to work, a hobby or interest, friends you spend time with. Is there some way to build into these things that you’re already doing some of these ideas about pursuing God?

¹ Mike Jordahl has written a very practical, very short introduction available here: <http://my.navigators.org/nav20s>.

² To dig in a little deeper into how personality affects approaches, I recommend *Invitation to a Journey* by M. Robert Mulholland, Jr.

³ This paper was written by Dean Storelli. You can find it online or leave questions and comments at human365.org.