

Rivalry or competition can easily push past fun into being harmful. Have you experienced a group where each person supported the others without slipping into jealousy?

Despair is the natural condition that arises from looking at the world as it is, where hope springs from the certainty that God can, does, and will show up. What have you experienced that was an instance of God showing up?

*Apatheia* is a spiritual detachment that allows one to channel instincts in healthy ways. How would this attitude assist with God bringing healing to unhealthy pride, anger, or despair?

### Week Six

#### *To Stand Where Christ Stands and Early Christian Writing*

Some people describe themselves as “spiritual, but not religious.” How does that contrast with “living in or according to ‘spirit’ as described in this chapter?

“The life of the Spirit is a life always in motion, never arriving at a final and satisfying level of comprehension.” Does this ring true for you in your own spiritual life? How does this portrait of faith differ from what you were taught about faith as a child or teen?

John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila saw the life in the spirit as conforming to Christ incarnate or “being a baptized Christian in a serious way.” Who have you known (or read of) who is an icon or image of what a follower of Jesus should be like?

Christianity presented a problem for the Rome, because the faith allowed no ultimate allegiance to any state. They would refuse even at the price of death. What rises to level of civil disobedience for you?

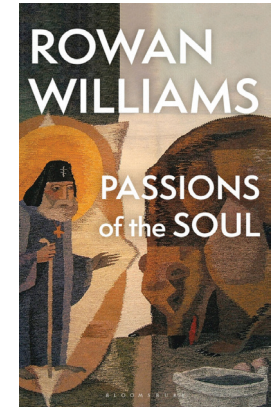
Early Christian writers would describe a love of others who were not familiar to us or like us. Who is someone you have come to love whose background is very different from yours?

EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF GEORGIA

Lent 2025 - 1Book1Diocese

## *Passions of the Soul*

by Rowan Williams



In this brief text the former Archbishop of Canterbury tells how self-awareness about our instincts and emotions can offer practical assistance in diagnosing what is binding us to unhelpful and potentially destructive patterns of thinking. In the process, Williams shows how these thoughts like pride or anger are not necessarily wrong in themselves if we attend to them properly.

### Questions for each week

A discussion group may use the following prompts as an icebreaker: What has been good, bad, and godly in the past week? *or* What was your moment closest to Christ? As time permits, close in discussing: What else stood out in this week’s reading?

### Week One

#### *Introduction and Mapping the Passions of the Soul*

While the vocabulary is different, the concept is like the Rite I confession, “we have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep, we have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts.” What patterns do people fall into that fit this idea of our desires leading one to stray from the path?

Read James 1:12-16. Do these verses fit with or challenge what you were taught about temptation? How does this

passage illumine the chains of thought that can trap us or get us stuck?

Noting someone is attractive is fine, but continual fantasy about a person can be harmful. Likewise envy of another should be acknowledged, but not nurtured. Is this view of the passions a fruitful shift in how we typically talk of sins?

Overdoing self-denial is no better than excessive self-indulgence. What are you giving up (or taking on) for Lent? How might you hold that lightly rather than rigidly?

### **Week Two**

#### *Pride, Listlessness and the Truth of Dependence*

When do you think people are most likely to view a connection with God as unnecessary? What sorts of things cause us to see our need for God?

Why do we usually find it easier to assist others than to ask for aid? Where do you fall on the self-reliance spectrum from finding it easy to ask for help when needed to always handling problems all on your own?

Why is acknowledging grief, pain, and injustice helpful? How does one benefit from feeling their feelings rather than avoiding them?

*Acedia* can be doing nothing or busying oneself with anything but what needs to get done. What do you do when you want to avoid facing the task in front of you? What daily practices help you to balance work and rest, doing and being?

### **Week Three**

#### *Anger, Gluttony and the Grace of Poverty*

Anger at injustice is good, yet anger is also blinding. How is the question “Whom does your anger serve” clarify when one is aiming this passion toward “good use?”

Jesus said, “Blessed are the meek” and “Those who humble themselves will be exalted.” What do meek and humble evoke

for you? Why do you think Jesus promote these virtues?

One description of gluttony includes “Condemnation of some material things or pleasures as evil in themselves, attempting to prohibit their use rather than their abuse” ([kingofpeace.org/selfexamination.pdf](http://kingofpeace.org/selfexamination.pdf)). How does this idea of temperance fit in with this teaching on the Passions?

Gluttony, which can either deny or over-indulge or needs, finds its antidote in deep concern for others. When has caring for someone in need helped you to gain perspective on what is truly essential?

### **Week Four**

#### *Avarice, Lust and the Risks of Mercy*

How have you seen social media distort the desire for control—of others, our circumstances, and our image? What would it look like for we who have been shown mercy to bring that grace to Facebook?

Setting success as a life goal is not bad, depending on how that is defined. Who have you admired and seen as an example of a life well lived that would not be considered a worldly success?

The title character in the 1996 movie *Jerry McGuire* declared his love saying, “You complete me.” How is this problematic from the standpoint this teaching on the Passions? What could McGuire have said that would reflect this week’s chapter?

Who has loved you for yourself and not as a means to their fulfillment? What difference do relationships of this kind make in one’s life?

### **Week Five**

#### *Envy, Despair and the Light of Hope*

Envy arises from seeing one person’s gain equaling the other’s loss. What does our faith teach us about how to disconnect our self-esteem from this competition to prove ourselves worthy by having or being more than others?