



# Trail Guide Creation

Congratulations! You have followed one (or more Trails) in Soul Connection, and you are interested in writing a Trail of your own. That's fantastic! While the app itself is amazing, the really important part is the content, i.e., the Trail directions which guide the user as they spend a day with God. This is a Trail Guide. New Trail Guides must be added frequently to keep the content fresh. Thank you for participating!

## What is Soul Connection?

This app is designed to be a help, or a guide, to assist someone in spending an extended time with God, as much as a full day. We expect that each Trail will take 6-8 hours to follow from beginning to end. Soul Connection is not designed to replace anyone's daily devotional or Bible study and prayer times.



The purpose of Soul Connection is to lead someone into a deeper, more intimate walk with God, to develop a better listening ear, and to better understand His unconditional love. The seven Pathways are: **Activist, Contemplative, Creation, Relational, Serving, Studious, and Worship**. While some of these Pathways may be more active in nature, the purpose is NOT to do more stuff, but rather to guide a follower of Jesus into spending time with God in different ways.

The seven Pathways are based in part on the work of Gary Thomas, John Ortberg, and others. Please see the full bibliography attached at the end. The essential concept is that God has created us with different personalities and temperaments, and thus we connect to Him in different ways. These seven Pathways may not be the only ways in which people connect with God, but likely are the most common. The Pathways are described below.

As you write a Trail Guide, keep this in mind: **the purpose is to connect with God**. It is not to build a stronger relationship with your spouse, or to organize a food pantry in your church, or produce a worship CD. While these elements or activities may be used in a Trail they are not the goal, or purpose. The ultimate purpose should always be connecting with God as Creator. Also, following a Trail may result in the motivation to change something in your life or in your world.



We use a fictional user "**Danny or Danielle the Disciple**" to help keep us focused as we write Trail Guides. They are a believer, familiar with using technology, may or may not have formal Bible training, is connected to a regular fellowship of believers, and is looking for ways to move deeper in their walk with God.



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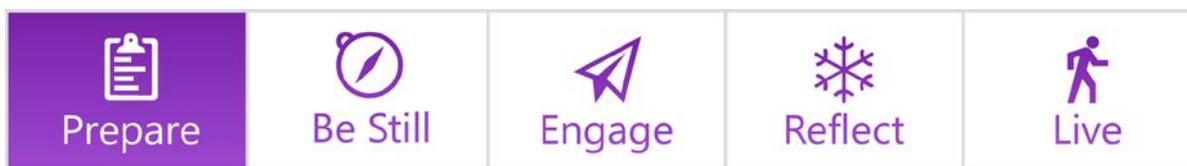
## How do I write a Trail Guide?

First, spend time in prayer, asking God to lead you in creating a Trail Guide. Read several of the existing Trails to understand what you are creating. Also, if possible, read several of the works we reference in the bibliography.

Next, decide on a Pathway. Maybe it is one you find interesting or matches you best. However, maybe it is the one to which God leads you. Choose the particular Trail topic you want to develop, such as “Bread Baking” or “Cross-Reference Study.” (These are actual Trail Guides in the app today.) Think about how to lead someone like Danielle into a closer walk with God for a day (6-8 hours or more) using your chosen topic. Be creative! Remember the purpose.

Plan an outline around how you want Danny to connect with God during the day. You may include physical activities, Scripture reading, meditation thoughts, prayer suggestions, etc. You may direct him to go somewhere, such as a park, or a forest, or an art gallery. Ask Danny to be observant of things around him and to spend time listening to God and reflecting. Include things to journal and ways to respond to God in praise and prayer.

Every Trail should be based on the truth of Scripture, and should rely on actual Scripture references and passages to read.



Each Trail Guide has 5 Steps: **Prepare**, **Be Still**, **Engage**, **Reflect**, and **Live** (live out). In the template below are further descriptions of what should be in each Step. Each step of the template contains instructions on how to write your text together with the standardized text that we suggest you include for consistency. The instructions also include guidelines for the length of each Step.

Remember that you can guide Danielle into a lot of reflection in a short amount of words. The length of the Trail Guide does not have to indicate the time involved. For example, you could ask her to spend several hours in an art exhibit, making notes of how the beauty of the art points her to God. Few words, but a long time.

## Things to avoid

Greater Europe Mission ([www.gemission.org](http://www.gemission.org)) is ecumenical and non-denominational. Your Trail Guide should focus on ways to connect personally with the Father, which is a common belief system across all Christian denominations and movements. Please do not write a Trail Guide to advance any one doctrinal belief system, political position, or the like. The focus needs to remain between the disciple and God. We reserve the right to approve only Trail guides that conform to the GEM Statement of Faith and follow these guidelines.



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Some of the Pathways, such as Activist and Serving, may lend themselves to focus on what we do rather than who we are. Trail Guides in these Pathways can be more of a challenge to write, but the focus needs to be on Danielle's relationship with God. While you may use acts of service in your Trail Guide, the focus is always to help people connect with Him more intimately. Also, avoid using these Pathways to give her a guilty conscience, or to advance any one particular type of service, or activist thinking.

## How to submit a Trail Guide

Write your Trail Guide using the Soul Connection Trail templates available at [www.gemedot.com/soul-connection](http://www.gemedot.com/soul-connection). Follow the formatting and writing guidelines. We have both MS Word and Google Docs templates. If you want to write your Trail Guide using another word processor, that's fine, too.

Send your completed Trail Guide to [apps@gemedot.com](mailto:apps@gemedot.com). We will acknowledge receipt of your document within a few days. One of our editors will review and proofread the doc. If we need to make any changes, we will send it back to you for approval. We will not publish anything without your approval of all edits.

We do not credit the authors of Trails by name. This is based on our prayerful consideration of the purpose of the app. Please understand that content you submit will be added to the Soul Connection app shortly after you approve it, unless you specify a future date submittal. The content will become part of the Soul Connection app and covered by the copyright of the app. GEM does not pay for Trail content creation.

When you submit a Trail that is accepted and published, you grant a perpetual, non-exclusive, license to Greater Europe Mission to use it within the Soul Connection app.





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## Seven Pathways

Activist	Loving God through justice and mercy.
Contemplative	Loving God through reflection and solitude.
Creation	Loving God through seeking Him in nature.
Relational	Loving God through connecting with others.
Serving	Loving God through aiding others.
Studious	Loving God through learning about Him.
Worship	Loving God through praise, prayer, and adoration.

## Bibliography

For additional reading in this area, Greater Europe Mission recommends the following resources:

- Dallas Willard. *Hearing God. Developing a conversational relationship with God.*
- Gary Thomas. *Sacred Pathways: Discover your soul's path to God.*
- Richard Foster. *Streams of Living Water.*
- Myra Perrin. *What's Your God Language? Connecting with God through your unique spiritual temperament.*
- Brian Rice. *The Exercises Volume One: Conversations.*
- Brian Rice. *The Exercises Volume Two: Invitations.*
- John Ortberg. *God is Closer than You Think.*
- John Ortberg. *The Life You've Always Wanted: Spiritual disciplines for ordinary people.*
- Richard Foster. *Celebration of Discipline: The path to spiritual growth.*



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## Trail Guide Template

This is the template for writing a Trail Guide for Soul Connection. Each Trail consists of five Steps: **Prepare, Be Still, Engage, Reflect, and Live**. In each Step in the template below are instructions and descriptions (**highlighted in yellow**) of what the Step should contain. Each Step has both standard text (in black) that is the same for all Trails, and **custom text (in blue)** that is specific for this Trail.

Please replace **the blue text** with your specific content that you are writing for this Trail. If you feel you must change the standard text in black please change the font color to **blue**. If your changes to the standard (black) text are significant, please work with us. The program has certain requirements (see below).

## Our Writing Standards and Conventions

Please follow these rules as you write your Trail.

- Capitalize pronouns referring to God.
- Capitalize direct references to Trails, Steps, and Pathways.
- Use the Oxford Comma (Place a comma before *and* and *or* in a list of three or more things. For example: first, second, and third.)
- Use Second Person for most of your Trail (direct your focus directly at the reader by using and implying *you* and *your*).
- Avoid First Person (do not use words like *I, me, my, we, or us*).
- Keep in mind that our target reading level is 7th grade. Please keep your use of complex sentence structure and advanced vocabulary to a minimum.
- Use Heading 4 sub-headings to break up longer pieces of text where the subject shifts.

## How to Format Your Trail

All normal, average paragraph text (like the one you're reading right now) should be set to **Normal text**.

Bullet lists, both numbered and non-numbered, are encouraged. To create these lists, use the toolbar. Please, do not do this by hand by putting a dash or some other character at the front of each line.

Use **Bold text** or *Italics* to highlight key points in your Trail. Never use Underline since that will make the reader think that it is a tappable link.

Please do not link to other websites. The reader might not have Internet connectivity plus the software can't always vouch for where a link might send the reader.

Before you submit this document for editing, please delete all of the instructional text **highlighted in yellow**



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## Complete the Following in Blue

Trail Name (e.g. "Food Bank")	Trail Title
Pathway (Activist, Contemplative, Creation, Relational, Serving, Studious, or Worship)	Pathway Name
Author:	Your Name
Complexity: (low, med,hi)	Complexity
Lead Time: (in days) (0, 1-2, 3+)	Lead time
Editor:	Assigned by eDOT



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## Step 1: Prepare

**This Step is the preparation stage before the Soul Connection Day and the focus is on thinking through and making whatever arrangements are needed. It should include enough information that someone preparing to follow the Trail will know ahead of time what is required and what must be completed beforehand. For example, this section should explain what advanced meetings might need to be scheduled, research required, and people to notify or coordinate with. While this can be as many paragraphs as needed, it should be no longer than 400 words.**

### Summary

**Short description of the trail no longer than 120 characters (including spaces) and comprising of one paragraph. It will be included here and in the Trail description where it will help people know what this Trail is about before even clicking on it.**

Enter your short description here.

Enter your complete text for the Prepare Step here.

### Supplies

- A Bible
- A journal (electronic or paper)
- [Your required supplies here](#)
- [Your required supplies here](#)
- [Your required supplies here](#)
- A willingness to meet with God

## Step 2: Be Still

**This Step is the beginning of the Spiritual Retreat Day and the focus is on preparing the heart and mind for conversing with God. There are several standard questions or instructions that are included in all “Be Still” steps, and you should include several that are specific for this Trail. It should be in the range of 400-500 words.**

### Sub-headers

**Use sub-headers as needed to break up and organize the text. They should be Heading 4 so they can be formatted correctly. Use number or bullet lists as needed to help break up the text and organize information.**

Prepare your heart and quiet your mind to focus on the conversation that God desires to have with you. Conversing with Him, being in His presence, should lead to life



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transformation. Recognize the need to change, and be willing to accept God's work of transformation in your life.

## Remove Distractions

Include here anything you want to write about removing distractions for your particular trail.

Lastly, your personal life – family, work, school, and other things that dominate your days – can be a distraction that keeps you from fully meeting with God. Do everything possible to eliminate distractions quickly and get back to your time with God. One proven method is to write them down in your journal or notebook and then set them aside. Let people know you are unavailable and will not be responding to calls, emails, text messages until later.

Give yourself permission to take time away from other responsibilities to pursue relationship with God.

## Invite God

Plan intentionally to be present with God during this activity by inviting Him to be with you in various ways.

- Invite God to communicate specifically with you as you [\[briefly describe activity\]](#). Follow Samuel's example in 1 Samuel 3:1-14: "Speak, for your servant hears."
- Invite God to speak from His Scripture to connect your conversation with His revealed Word in the Bible. You may want to highlight those verses for review and reflection later.
- Invite God to reveal truth about **Himself** to you. God may desire to change or broaden your view of Him, or He may desire for you to learn about an attribute of His that is lacking in your understanding of Him.
- Invite God to reveal truth about you, which may include thoughts such as: you are God's beloved child, you are a friend of God, and you are clothed with the righteousness of Christ.
- Invite God to reveal to you how He wants to transform you as a result of this conversation with Him.
- Invite God to ..... (1 to 3 ideas specific to this Trail)
- Invite God to ..... (1 to 3 ideas specific to this Trail)
- Invite God to ..... (1 to 3 ideas specific to this Trail)

## Prepare Your Heart for this Trail

Add here any instructions or comments you have for the reader to prepare their heart and mind specifically for this trail.



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Ask God to reveal to you anything that you need to acknowledge and confess. Repent and ask forgiveness. He is faithful to forgive and cleanse (1 John 1:9).

## Relax

God, your loving heavenly Father, eagerly desires to communicate with you. You are his child, called "friend" by Jesus Himself, and not just a servant.

## Step 3: Engage

**This Step is the “meat” of the Spiritual Retreat Day and the focus is on the actual activities for the Trail. This is where you will include all the things you want the follower to do, to think about, to contemplate, to focus on, etc., for the day. This is the longest step of the Trail, and can be as long as 700-900 words.**

### Sub-headers

Use sub-headers as needed to break up and organize the text. They should be Heading 4 so they can be formatted correctly. Use number or bullet lists as needed to help break up the text and organize information.

Include here your instructions, activities, comments, etc. that you want the reader to follow. There is no standard content for this Step.

## Step 4: Reflect

**This Step comes after the follower has completed everything in the Engage step of the Spiritual Retreat Day and the focus is on reflection and seeking God’s thoughts on transformation. There are several standard questions or instructions that are included in all “Reflect” steps, and you should include several that are specific for this Trail. It should be no longer than 200-300 words.**

Please do not use bullets in this section because they might clutter and distract from the Reflection Questions.

Once you complete the Engage step, journal any thoughts that God spoke to you. As you journal, ask God to guide your thoughts. Give praise and worship to God as He communes with you.

Include here any thoughts or instructions you want the reader to follow in this Reflect step based on this Trail’s content and purpose.

## Reflection Questions

Consider the following questions to reflect on the insights God has given you:

- Your reflection questions based on your Trail content here. (1-3 questions)
- Your reflection questions based on your Trail content here. (1-3 questions)



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- Your reflection questions based on your Trail content here. (1-3 questions)
- How does His word to you align with Scripture?
- What did God reveal about **Himself**? About **you**?
- What should you change as a result of this conversation with God?
- How will you thank and praise God for His conversation with you?

## Step 5: Live

**This Step is the last step of the Spiritual Retreat Day and the focus is on how the follower chooses to live out what God has spoken during the day. These are mainly standard questions and instructions, but you may include a couple of specific items to be included. The length should be less than 200 words.**

### Sub-headers

Use sub-headers as needed to break up and organize the text. They should be Heading 4 so they can be formatted correctly. Use number or bullet lists as needed to help break up the text and organize information.

As you consider your responses to the Reflection Questions, what next steps is God asking you to take in the next few days or week? Choose one area that the Lord has revealed to you that should change, and let that be your accountability focus.

Include here your custom instructions and questions based on your Trail content and purpose.

Pray for God to give you grace as He transforms you.

For accountability and encouragement in your walk toward Christlikeness, share today's experience and thoughts with another believer, asking them to follow up with you as God's transformation is happening.

In your daily time with God, reflect on how His transformation in this area is progressing. Praise Him for His continual love and grace and transformative power in you. Surrender humbly to the process that God is using to make you more like Jesus.