

As people who are joyfully and unapologetically Christian, we pledge ourselves completely to the way of Love. We work to express our love, as Jesus teaches us, in three ways: by loving God, neighbor, and self.

(Matt 22:34-40 / Mk 12:28-31 / Lk 10:25-28; Cf. Deut 6:5; Lev. 19:18)

- The Phoenix Affirmations Preamble

CROSSROADS takes the Bible seriously, not literally, and we do NOT focus on dogma or doctrine. We focus on God's reconciling love and call to "heart-full" service. Christian men who do focus on dogma and doctrine and/or hold a literal view of the Bible are welcome, but may have a difficult time in this program and are encouraged to consider other Christian wilderness retreat programs such as *Marked Men for Christ*, *Wild at Heart*, *Band of Brothers*, and others.

Is that 'men in the woods' stuff OK to do as a Christian? Isn't that pagan?

That depends on what you mean by pagan. If pagan means those practices that did not originate out of the church tradition (often before a church existed) or any practice that emerges from a sense of the sacred way of the earth, then yes, some of what we do you might call pagan.

We don't really use the term much at all, but whether you call it pagan or not, we do not inherently assume that everything before Jesus or not from the Euro-western world is antithetical to the Jesus' Way.

So we don't use pagan as a term for antithetical to Christianity. If we did use the term, we would use it as a description of other traditions that were more indigenous and earth centered than many people (not us) consider traditional Christianity to be. But we understand that the God of Jesus is the Creator of all the earth and that all of earth's people have experienced the divine power of Creation and its Creatures.

In fact, the Creation centered aspect of Christianity has long been overlooked in Scripture and tradition, much to the detriment (in our opinion) of the faithful and the Creation. We don't overlook it. We embrace it. In ritual, we honor the experiential wisdom of indigenous world traditions (and Christianity) so we might participate in an ancient practice of humanity like sweat prayer or circle dance. We are ALL indigenous to God's Creation at some level, even if our ancestors emigrated great distances, and evolved their symbol world to a Christian one.

We don't see conflict here, but complement.

I'm not sure I'm in good enough shape to be in the wilderness.

Is *CrossRoads* a wilderness experience like *Outward Bound* or something?

No. *CrossRoads* is not a test of physical stamina. We sleep in bunks in rustic camp buildings and stay near camp mostly. We rest and eat well, and we focus on safety even as we work the inner "edges" where men choose to risk. We're not into macho.

We are into courage and honesty and acceptance of our common humanity and brotherhood that is the essence of the Gospel. However, our usual camp site is at significant altitude, around 9500'. If you have concerns, please discuss them with your healthcare practitioner and with us.

Why do I have to go out in the woods to find God?

Jesus said to them, 'Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.'
Mark 6:31

Well, we didn't say God was only in the wilderness, but Jesus and many others have heard the Spirit's call to wilderness, to separate from everyday life and enter a wilder place, a different space, for it is in this altered space on the "edge" of our experience where reflection and challenge can lead to transformation and renewal. Then, connected to the wisdom and power of Creation and the Creator Spirit, one can return to one's everyday life and to family and community in a new way with new gifts. It's an ancient soul practice of initiation; separation, trial, and return.