

## Finding God For Myself

Naturalists – prefer to leave any building, however beautiful, to pray to God beside a river. Leave the books behind, forget the demonstrations – just let them take a walk through the woods, mountains or open meadows – nature proclaims “God is!”

Sensates – want to be lost in the awe, beauty, and splendor of God. They are drawn particularly to the liturgical, the majestic, the grand. When these Christians worship, they want to be filled with sights, sounds, and smells that overwhelm them. Incense, architecture, classical music and formal language send their hearts soaring.

Traditionalists – are fed by what are often termed the historic dimensions of faith: rituals, symbols, sacraments and sacrifice. These Christians tend to have a disciplined life of faith. Some may be seen as legalists, defining their faith largely by matters of conduct such as regular attendance, tithing, or keeping Sabbath.

Ascetics – want nothing more than to be left alone in prayer. Take away the liturgy, the trappings of religion, the noise of the outside world. Let there be nothing to distract them. Ascetics live a fundamentally internal existence. Even when part of a group of people, they might seem to be isolated as they are frequently introspective.

Activists – serve a God of justice, and their favorite Scripture is often the account of Jesus cleansing the temple. They define worship as standing against evil and calling sinners to repentance. These Christians often view the church as a place to recharge their batteries so they can go back to wage war against injustice in the world.

Caregivers – serve God by serving others. They often claim to see Christ in the poor and needy, and their faith is built up by interacting with other people. Such Christians may find the devotional lives of contemplative and enthusiasts as selfish. Caring for others might wear some down, this recharges a caregiver’s batteries.

Enthusiasts – and mystery in worship is the spiritual lifeblood of enthusiasts. As sensates want to be surrounded by beauty, enthusiasts are inspired by joyful celebration. These Christians are cheerleaders for God and the Christian life. Let

them clap their hands, shout “Amen!” and dance in their excitement.

Contemplatives – refer to God as their lover, and images of a loving Father and Bridegroom predominate their view of God. The focus is not necessarily on serving God as it is on loving God with the purest, deepest, love imaginable. An example of a contemplative would be Mary of Bethany who extravagantly anointed Jesus’ feet.

Intellectual – Intellectuals might be skeptics or committed believers, but in either case they are likely to be studying (and in some cases arguing either for or against) doctrine. These Christians live in the world of concepts. Depending on personality some intellectuals might be shy or withdrawn. Faith for them is to enter into understanding.

**Note:** Thankfully your spiritual path is not one you must choose for life. You will at times find yourself traveling all nine as you seek to worship God in meaningful ways. You should however develop your spiritual disciplines in ways that enhance your own temperament rather than stifle it. To study hours on end would be fatal for a naturalist, but helpful for an intellectual. Find ways that regularly (if not daily) allow you to connect with the Father. For further reading about the spiritual pathways read, Sacred Pathways by Gary Thomas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996).