

# Sacred Pathways: Descriptions

## 1. Naturalists: Loving God Out of Doors

Naturalists would prefer to leave any building, however beautiful or austere, 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. These Christians believe that nature clearly proclaims “God is!” They may learn more from watching an ant colony or looking at a peaceful lake than from reading a book or listening to a sermon, though they may find fulfilling thoughts from the parables of Christ, which are based on nature, or the Psalms. Naturalists are related to contemplatives, except that they are moved by creation in addition to the inner world. When they are out of doors, their heart soars to worship God. Naturalists learn to seek God by surrounding themselves with all that he has made.

## 2. Sensates: Loving God with the Senses

Sensate Christians 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, intricate architecture, classical music, and formal language send their hearts soaring. Whereas some Christians might find such a sensuous onslaught distracting, these Christians delight in it. The five senses are God’s most effective inroad to their hearts. Anything that touches the senses can be a powerful arbiter of worship for sensate Christians.

## 3. Traditionalists: Loving God Through Ritual and Symbol

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 by others as legalists, defining their faith largely by matters of conduct. Frequently they enjoy regular attendance at church services, tithing, keeping the Sabbath, and so on. Traditionalists have a need for ritual and structure. The contemplatives’ unstructured “prayer of the quiet” would be confusing and fairly unfulfilling to them.

## 4. Ascetics: Loving God in Solitude and Simplicity

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—no pictures, no loud music—and leave them alone to pray in silence and simplicity. Ascetics live a fundamentally internal existence. Even when they are part of a group of people, they might seem to be isolated from the others. Frequently introspective, sometimes to a fault, they are uncomfortable in any environment that keeps them from “listening to the quiet.”

## 5. Activists: Loving God Through Confrontation

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 into the world to wage war against injustice. Activists may adopt either social or evangelistic causes, but they find their home in the rough-and-tumble world of confrontation. They are energized more by interaction with others, even in conflict, than by being alone or in small groups.

## **6. Caregivers: Loving God by Loving Others**

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 contemplatives and enthusiasts as selfish. Whereas caring for others might wear many of us down, this recharges a caregiver's batteries.

## **7. Enthusiasts: Loving God with Mystery and Celebration**

Excitement and mystery in worship is the spiritual lifeblood of enthusiasts. As Sensates want to be surrounded by beauty and intellectuals want to be grappling with concepts, 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, that's all they ask. If their hearts aren't moved, if they don't experience God's power, something is missing. They don't want to just know concepts, but to experience them, to feel them, and to be moved by them.

## **8. Contemplatives: Loving God Through Adoration**

Contemplatives refer to God as their lover, and images of a loving Father and Bridegroom predominate their view of God. Their favorite Bible passages might be taken from the Song of Songs as they enter the "divine romance." The focus is not necessarily on serving God, doing his will, accomplishing great things in his name, or even obeying God. Rather, these Christians seek to love God with the purest, deepest, and brightest love imaginable.

## **9. Intellectuals: Loving God with the Mind**

Intellectuals might be skeptics or committed believers, but in either case they are likely to be studying (and, in some instances, arguing either for or against) doctrines like Calvinism, infant baptism, ordination of women, and predestination. These Christians live in the world of concepts. Some intellectuals, influenced by a personality type that may be shy or withdrawn, might avoid intellectual confrontation but still be "fed" primarily by intellectual activity. "Faith" is something to be understood as much as experienced. They may feel closest to God when they first understand something new about him.

*One of the ways to determine your dominant spiritual temperament is to list those Christians whom you most admire and seek to emulate. How would you describe each one? If you consistently find yourself picking leaders of a particular spiritual temperament, You may share that makeup.*