
PRAYER AND TEMPERAMENT

Based on the book "Prayer & Temperament" (Chapter. 2) by C.P. Michael and M.C. Norrisey which applies the Myers-Briggs personality style profile to spirituality.

Introduction to Temperament

Four pairs of preferences:

- E - I** extroversion - introversion
- S - N** sensing - intuition
- T - F** thinking - feeling
- J - P** judging - perceiving

The first and last pairs are called *attitudes* because they represent the *orientation* of the individual in regard to the world.

E – extrovert: stimulated by the outer world of people and things

I – introvert: derives energy from the inner world of ideas, concepts, feelings, and spirit

J – judging: primarily concerned with how things should be.

P – perceiving: primarily concerned with how things are.

The middle pairs of preferences are called functions. They have to do with the method one uses to relate to the world or to oneself.

S – sensing: concentrates on what is available to the senses (visible, audible, etc.)

N – intuitive: concentrates on the inner sense of things

T – thinking: uses the intellect to arrive at a conclusion through reasoning

F – feeling: makes decisions based on how one feels about things

Temperament and Prayer

Benedictine Prayer

St. Benedict of Nursia was a simple Italian monk of the sixth century. More than 1500 years ago he composed his now famous Rule for monastic life. There were monks here and there before Benedict, but it was he who crystallized the best of the fledgling monastic tradition, prescribing a standard of spiritual wisdom that has endured ever since. The Rule sets forth an outline for Christian discipleship drawn from the heart of Jesus' ministry—the call to follow Christ, to be transformed by the work of the Holy Spirit, and to become living witnesses to the grace of God in the world. Every aspect of Benedictine spirituality flows from it. The Rule is about community living—a day-to-day basic guide originally written for Christian men who wanted to be monks, telling them what to do, how to be Christ-followers in that unique way, and how to get along with each other. Lectio Divina is a traditional Benedictine practice of scriptural reading, meditation and prayer intended to promote communion with God and to increase the knowledge of God's Word.

Lectio Divina

Lectio divina is suitable for all temperaments; it uses all four functions. Bible reading is the base.

1. **Lectio** (reading) – uses *senses* in reading or perceiving God's works.
2. **Meditatio** (meditation) – uses *thinking* to reflect upon one's reading
3. **Oratio** (prayer) – uses *feeling* to personalize insights for communion
4. **Contemplation** (contemplation) – uses *intuition* to coalesce reading, meditation, and prayer into new insights

The four steps respond to characteristics of all four temperaments:

1. **Reading – SJ:** study and search to discover wisdom and direction
2. **Reflection – NT:** gets answers and practical fruit
3. **Prayer – NF + SP:** intimacy with God, feelings of adoration, contrition, thanksgiving
4. **Contemplation – NF:** adapting to one's own situation

Ignatian Prayer and Spirituality – The SJ Temperament

This way of praying was used by Israel 1000 years before Christ. In remembering a salvation event, the people relive, participate in, and symbolically make past events real. All four functions apply, and the structures resemble Lectio Divina. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuit Order, developed this method in the 4th century AD. Casting oneself back into the events of the past, one imagines the scene through all five senses, making the story real and present and becoming part of it. It's important to draw some practical fruit. The Christian Liturgical Year, commemorating events in Jesus' life, especially the Holy Week Liturgy, indicates the popularity of Ignatian Prayer.... SJ's represent 40% of the population and 50% of church attendance. They have a strong sense of duty, and a good imagination. They tend to be pessimistic.

Augustinian Prayer and Spirituality - The NF Temperament

Named in honor of St. Augustine - who developed rules of spirituality for the monks and convents in North Africa. The key word is projection, using creative imagination to transpose scripture to today's situation. Especially used by NF's who are usually creative, optimistic, verbal, persuasive, outspoken, writers and speakers; good listeners, counselors, conflict resolvers and peacemakers. Handling negative criticism is difficult for NFs, but they blossom under affirmation. 12% of population. Visionaries. Prayer is a discourse between God and the self.

Franciscan Prayer and Spirituality -- The SP Temperament

St. Francis (an ESFP?) introduced this type of spirituality in the 13th century. It is characterized by an attitude of openness and willingness to go where the Spirit calls. (38% of population). SP's are impulsive free spirits, often witty and charming. They love action and work best in a crisis. They are good at unsnarling messes, making them good negotiators and diplomats. They tend to be flexible and open-minded, living in the present. They are best at short-range projects, because they need to see results. Centering life in God. Creation is a Bible – every sense is impressionable; Gospels are appealing as another example of the incarnation of God in creation. Appreciate the grand gesture, like St. Francis stripping off his clothes... Although very sacrificial, SP's don't respond well to the symbolic. They usually dislike formal prayer, preferring spirit-filled, impulsive prayer or seeing work, celebration, or enjoying nature, etc. as prayer.

Thomistic Prayer and Spirituality -- The NT Temperament

Recommended by St. Thomas Aquinas and using syllogistic methods of thinking and orderly progression of thought from cause to effect, i.e. rational thinking to arrive at an appropriate conclusion. Based on the rationalism of the West's last four centuries. NT's (12% of the population) have a great thirst for truth and for the freedom that flows from knowing truth. They desire to comprehend, explain, predict and control. They tend to be leaders, and also tend to pursue perfection and see stupidity and incompetence as the worst possible faults. They can be overcritical and are often work-a-holics. They are poor losers -- very competitive. They tend to be impersonal in relationships. NT spirituality is scientific-oriented. May use seven auxiliary questions: "what, why, how, who, where, when, with what helps" to explore the topic at hand (like "faith"). "Metanoia" or conversion is an important result.

How Temperament Has Affected Christian Spirituality

Jesus:

As a fully mature person, was both *extravert* and *introvert*, both *sensing* and *intuitive*, both *thinking* and *feeling*, both *judging* and *perceiving*, depending upon the situation. (p. 21) The more mature and Christ-like we become, the more balanced we become in the use of all four attitudes and all four functions.

Apostles:

St. Paul (intuitive-feeling – nf) envisioned new insights regarding the Kingdom of God for example shedding the most oppressive shackles of Mosaic Law. **ENFP**

St. James (sensing-judging – sj) focused on putting faith into action. He was conservative, insisting on keeping some Mosaic law. (Acts 15-13-21) **ISTJ**

St. John (intuitive-thinking – nt) synthesized ideas, forming Christian theology in the 1st century. He was a contemplative mystic. **INTJ**

St. Peter (sensing-perceiving – sp) was a person of action, trouble-shooting during the Council of Jerusalem and reconciling. (Acts 15) **ESFP**

The Evangelists: (provide four different viewpoints of Jesus' character, life events and teachings)

Matthew (sensing-judging – sj) points out how Jesus is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. **ESTJ**

Mark (sensing-perceiving – sp) is action-oriented. **ESFP**

Luke (intuitive-feeling – nf) is person-oriented, showing Jesus' great compassion for sinners, women, and outcasts. **INFP**

John (intuitive-thinking – nt) emphasizes truth and knowledge and is the most mystical and contemplative of the four. **INTJ**