

What is Your Spiritual Type?

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What is your favorite part of worship here on a Sunday morning? Do you like that liberal religion is defined and celebrated here, Sunday after Sunday, same place, same time? Or is your favorite part joys and sorrows or coffee hour, because you like to talk? Do you feel like you haven't been to church if you don't get a hug? Or is it the silence, the prayer or the chiming of the singing bowl that speaks to you? Or is your favorite part the announcements, or the Share Half offering when you get to find out how and when to do something to make this world a better place? How about the choir? Do you like that it is consistently excellent? That the music often inspires you to feel? That singing makes you feel at one with others? That the songs inspire you to work for justice?

What is your least favorite part? Does not beginning and not ending promptly drive you crazy? Do joys and concerns embarrass you? Do you sit so you can look out the window because that is secretly your favorite part of being here? Do you think services are a waste of time if they don't cause you and others to want to take concrete action in the "real" world?

This morning, I am going to invite you to reflect on the attitudes and activities that characterize how you most comfortably make a connection with whatever you consider to be most worthy of your ultimate focus. For means of simplicity, I'll use the shorthand phrase "spiritual type" for all those attitudes and activities that most serve to connect to whatever you consider higher being. I want you to leave today, with a better understanding of your way of expressing whatever it is you come to church to express. I want you to better understand what you need to feel connected, what it takes to feel like you have been "to church". And I want to understand that what feels like worship to you, may be quite different from what feels like worship for the person sitting next to you.

Sometimes we think that if we make space for the theists (those who believe in the existence of a specific God or who value a God-concept) and the humanists, those who are agnostic or a-theist, and for those who define themselves as more earth centered, we have covered the variety of preferences...here. Yet, if we think only about these three differences...theistic, humanist, neo-pagan... it keeps us from looking at another way we are a diverse which may have a much more powerful impact on how we understand our expectations and needs.

Knowing about spiritual types can help us to understand different styles of worship across different faiths, different styles of worship within a particular faith, and the variety of expressions within particular denomination, and the diversity present here most every Sunday.

The premise of this is that all of us have a "primary" spiritual type. Discovering what yours is, will help you to appreciate that the spiritual expressions of others may be very different from yours. Discovering your spiritual type, will help you see that no one way is the "right" way. That no one type is the "truly" spiritual type. For it

takes all of us to make a whole congregation, to express and appreciate all the ways that we can together connect with what is worthy in this life.

So, I am going to ask you a series of questions. Try to keep track of how many you can say yes to!

1. So, when you sing a hymn, do you look ahead to see if you agree with the words?
2. Do especially like the music when it sounds like the kind you might hear at the Symphony?
3. Could you easily complete this sentence: The truth is ____?
4. Is it important to you that services, or meetings, or classes start and end on time?
5. Does the wording of the Unitarian Universalist principles, of the church mission statement, or of the statement of affirmation really matter to you?
6. Are you especially interested in the content of most sermons and want to read more about whatever the subject is?
7. Do you take pleasure in intellectual inquiry and critical investigation?
8. Do you have a passion for congruence in thought and statement, wanting propositions to be demonstrably logical?
9. Do you want to hear more sermons about our Unitarian Universalist heritage?
10. Does being right mean more to you than being in relationship?
11. Do you prefer classes where an expert speaks on UU history or World Religions over one on spiritual autobiography?
12. Do you like the Sunday service to be all of a piece, carefully planned, with a clear theme running throughout?

If you said yes to most of those questions, your spiritual type is HEAD! You approach spirituality with your intellect. You appreciate history, order, logic...tradition! Going to church is to put the world back into proper order...

Try these:

1. Do you really love that we end worship holding hands?
2. Is your idea of a good service one that deeply moves you, brings tears to your eyes, or makes you feel deep joy?
3. Do you enjoy encountering others on a one on one basis?
4. Do you like meetings, classes, social functions, coffee hour because you can share conversation with those you like seeing and being with?
5. Is time for spoken Joys and Sorrows very important to you whether or not you have something to share...because you want to know what's going on with people?
6. When you come to a Sunday Service, do you hope to leave knowing the speaker better than you did before?
7. Do you prefer an Adult RE class where people get to tell their own stories?
8. Would you like to see more opportunities for sharing your spiritual autobiography and hearing other's?
9. Do conflicts really matter to you, either energizing you or draining you?
10. Does being in relationship mean more to you than being right?
11. Are you satisfied if a sermon tells a good story?

12. Do you love having the children in the service, even when (or especially when) they are spontaneous and talkative?

You are all HEART! You approach spirituality with your emotions, and haven't been "to church" unless you have made an emotional connection.

How about these?

1. In your best moments, do you feel in tune with/one with the whole universe?
2. Does the metaphor of life as a journey really work for you?
3. Does prayer or meditation appeal to you, the more in silence the better?
4. Do you love being alone and wish you could be alone more?
5. Do you wish the loud conversations inside this room were kept to a minimum, so that you could more easily make the transition from your busy life to this worship time?
6. Do you like the sound of the chime calling you to be present to the moment?
7. Do you wish there were more and longer periods to empty yourself of the chatter of daily life during our worship services?
8. Is the chalice lighting and just coming forward to light a candle during joys and sorrows... parts of the service that are important for you?
9. Do you love chants and rounds?
10. Is it important to you that our church building, inside and out, be a place of beauty and serenity? Would you like for us to have a building that was big enough to separate the fellowship area from the sanctuary?
11. Would you like to see more communion services, (water, flower, bread, because ritual speaks to you in a ways that words don't)?
12. Does a class or a group focused on the sacredness of ordinary moments appeal to you?

You are a MYSTIC. Approaching the ultimate has to do with emptying yourself, being at one with the great beyond...

And finally?

1. Did you like the UU slogan, "deeds not creeds"?
2. Do you believe that one of the best ways to find out who you are and what you believe is to act publicly in concert with others?
3. Would you be highly complimented to be called an activist, or an advocate?
4. Have you attended a Social Action Team meeting...(with a proposal for us to do something)?
5. Did you participate in Moral Mondays?
6. Where you or are you considering being in the Peace Corps?
7. Do you get goose bumps when singing, "We Shall Overcome", or when we use gospel or folk songs that inspire you to work for justice?
8. Do you believe that the purpose of a church is to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable?
9. Is it important to you that The Newsletter, the bulletin boards, the e-news and the spoken announcements make people aware of the ways that we can put our values into action in the community...in the state...in the world?
10. Do you wish our congregation did more work to dismantle ableism, ageism, racism and homophobia?
11. Do you believe that the purpose of a church is to transform the world and not just to change ourselves?

12. Do you believe that church services should be the way we express our convictions?

Your spiritual type is HANDS. Worship may be the last place you want to be. There's too much to do "out there"!

If you are guided by your head you may value the intellectual and speculative approach to worship, tending to appreciate what can be put in logical terms. Concepts are valuable to you. This type of spirituality favors heritage and form, what it can see, touch, and vividly imagine. Words and speaking are important. Your aim in coming to church is intellectual renewal, finding better ways of understanding what is worthy of your attention in life. Order, structure, heritage are important. "Rank by Rank" is the kind of hymn you relate to. Corporate congruence is important.

Yet, over reliance on this spiritual type leads to intolerant rationalism, persons always on the lookout for the illogical, or what fine point they can argue with. Perhaps a growing edge for persons with this type of spirituality is to be found in learning to wait, in practicing whatever slows the rush to thinking. Head types might be served by taking a meditation class, where they may learn to empty the mind.

If you are of the Heart type, also like Head appreciates vivid images, stories with characters...but everything that really matters will always be filtered through your feelings. Whatever your feelings are in the current moment are the most important thing to you. You come to church to feel good. You may feel abandoned or forsaken by your religion when you feel low or angry. Your aim in worship is personal renewal and transformation. Spontaneity, warmth, memory, story, practical serving make sense to you. You may not be on the picket line, but you will volunteer to clean up the kitchen, because your momma did and her momma before that. "Amazing Grace" is your hymn.

The weakness, or shadow side, of this type is sentimentality or what used to be called "pietism"...It is easy for you to adopt a holier than thou attitude. If you are a Heart type your growing edge may be to immerse yourself in learning to think critically adding that skill to your immense ability to feel.

If you are a Mystic path, hearing is more important than speaking. Your aim is union with the divine, or renewal of your inner life. For you the Sacred is a creative force, met through journey. Being, symbol, beauty, and ritual speak to you. Chants are your song. The practice of contemplation is important to you.

A weakness of this path may be isolated withdrawal from the world. A reality check might be in order!

Those who are Hands type aren't satisfied unless they are engaged in action. These are the crusaders. They measure worth by the level of their, and of your, commitment and passion. We'll Build a Land may be your song. If you are a Hands type the transformation of society is important to you.

Too much emphasis on this as "the" path leads to moralistic fanaticism. So your growing edge may be whatever helps you to experience joy in the present moment, realizing the need to constantly work for a better world can be modulated by focus on now, rather than always then...

Exclusive dominance in any one quadrant leads to its excess, dogmatism, emotionalism, withdrawal, or tunnel-vision. Any congregation that allows the expression of only one spiritual type, will drive out those who express themselves differently. And they will also too easily identify their particular spiritual tendency as THE

RIGHT WAY...missing appreciation for balance and wholeness ...It is important to be with those who are different from you, to learn what it means to be whole.

All individuals and groups have multiple spiritual tendencies. How many of you couldn't decide and find you are of two types, or three? What might you think is the dominant type of this congregation? ...of UUism in general?

As a worship leader, I try to remember to build into every worship service what will appeal to every type.

I know that any time I hear folks insist that the right way to do worship is to end at such and such a time..., or we must have spoken joys and sorrows, or more silence please, or so come to me afterwards and say; "so what are we supposed to do about it?"...that they are telling me what their spiritual type is!

Probably the most important thing to take away today is for all of us to know that these four "types" are not liberal vs conservative, or reflective of theism, humanist or pagan. There are not liberal or conservative. There are theistic, humanist and pagan groups peopled by all four types. It is not the case that any of these styles are better or more mature than the others, just different. They reach different people in different ways at different times. A whole church ought to attend to meeting everyone's needs for comfort and challenge. There are those who express their spirituality and expect to be addressed in a cognitive/intellectual/head fashion or a emotive/connectional/heart fashion, or an introspective/meditational/mystic fashion or who are hands on activists. And all of you are here every Sunday!

What I hope you have heard is that we are more diverse and perhaps in deeper ways than we may have imagined. It takes all of us, to be whole!

Read more about this topic: [Discover Your Spiritual Type](#)