

The Spiritual Style Test

The Dutch theologian Geert Groote (1340-1384) made the following wise statement: "Nothing is so dangerous as to preach about God and perfection, and not to point out the way that leads to perfection." It is not enough for Christian teachers to describe the destination of life, they must also help people identify their starting point. On the basis of these two pieces of information (starting point and destination), the challenge is to work out a growth plan that will help you get from your starting point to your destination. For that reason, we have developed the Spiritual Style Test. Identifying your starting point (native style) automatically helps you discover what you have to do in order to experience further growth in your faith.

The Spiritual Style Test hasn't been developed as a personality test. It doesn't define your character. Rather, it describes the way you currently and most naturally connect with God. The test result is neither "good" nor "bad," since no style is better or worse than the others. However, the result would definitely be "bad" if it does not lead you to pursue greater spiritual growth. A profile should be regarded as "good" only if it motivates you to get involved in a concrete growth plan.

Spiritual Style Test:

Since most Christians tend to confuse spiritual tradition with personal spiritual style, it is important to have an instrument that helps us identify our native style with precision. In 2009, to develop such a test, the Institute for Natural Church Development conducted research in 62 countries and 71 denominations. On the basis of this research, it was possible to develop a survey that enables every Christian to identify his or her spiritual style. At the same time, the survey can be used—if repeatedly taken—to highlight progress in the growth process.

How to complete the test

1 Read through the following **72 statements** and, using a pencil so you can repeat the test in the future, place an "X" on the answer that is *most applicable* to you. Answer as spontaneously as possible, thinking primarily of your most recent experiences. Be honest with yourself. Only then will you get helpful results.

2 Once you have answered all of the questions, follow the **instructions on pages 69-70**. The results will reveal how strongly each of the nine spiritual styles is presently developed in your life.

3 Page 71 gives you five **evaluation questions**. Once you have answered these questions, you will know (a) your native style, (b) the wing of your native style, (c) your style family, (d) your opposite style, (e) the predominant style of your church.

4 This is all the information for **individualizing the remaining pages** of this book for your personal needs. At the same time, this is all the information needed for starting a "training program" (both in the area of your strengths and your weaknesses) that is based on your actual needs.

5 In order to monitor the success of your growth, you are advised to **repeat the Spiritual Style Test** periodically. As you do this, you can monitor your progress in the area of the style you have focused on, as well as discover if another style has become your most natural style.

And now—enjoy the exercise!

The following statement applies to me:

	not at all	slightly	moderately	to a large extent	very much	
1						My spiritual life is very much influenced by artistic or natural beauty.
2						In my view, the study of science can be a wonderful way to learn more about God.
3						A theological system that reflects God's truth helps me in my spiritual life.
4						Scripture is a filter through which I assess all of my opinions.
5						I strongly sense God's presence whenever I pass on the grace of God to others.
6						The "desert" as a place to gain spiritual experience is appealing to me.
7						For me, being excited about God is an important aspect of the Christian faith.
8						My faith is very receptive to personal revelations from God.
9						For me it is important that faith is expressed in visible, physical forms.
10						Others would say that I am very perceptive to what is happening around me.
11						People would say that I love the Lord with my mind.
12						I believe that wrong teachings are one of the greatest dangers to the church.
13						I am constantly asking how the Word of God applies to my daily life.
14						My prayer life is characterized by intercession for people who have not yet experienced God's love.
15						For me, freedom from worldly things is an important sign of spiritual maturity.
16						I seek to experience more and more of God's power in my life.
17						The mysteries of the Christian faith are very appealing to me.
18						I am very receptive to symbols and liturgy.
	1	2	3	4	5	

The following statement applies to me:

	not at all	slightly	moderately	to a large extent	very much	
19						For me, growth in faith includes growing in my ability to enjoy God's creation more fully.
20						I am curious to find truth wherever it may appear.
21						The accuracy of our stated beliefs is of utmost importance to me.
22						When God's Word is proclaimed I feel very close to him.
23						It saddens me when church traditions create a barrier to those outside the church.
24						I believe that a Christian's life should be sacrificial.
25						I believe that whenever Christians come together for worship, the presence of God should be strongly felt.
26						The goal of my Christian pilgrimage can be described as increasing unity with God.
27						Traditions and ceremonies are very helpful for my spiritual development.
28						For me, physical pleasure can be a great way to experience God's love.
29						Intellectually learning something new about God is a deep spiritual experience for me.
30						I would prefer to be seen as somewhat "judgmental" than as someone who compromises the truth.
31						My personal Bible study is focused on personal life transformation.
32						It is of utmost importance to me that people outside the church are a major focus of Christian activity.
33						Purity and holiness are important values for me.
34						It is very important to me to experience God's supernatural acts.
35						Sometimes the Spirit speaks to me directly, without mediation of other people or the Bible.
36						Visual forms of presenting God's truth are very appealing to me.
	1	2	3	4	5	

The following statement applies to me:

	not at all	slightly	moderately	to a large extent	very much	
37						Many things that have a high spiritual impact on me, are viewed by other believers as "worldly."
38						I consider it positive to have a critical mindset toward spiritual questions.
39						It is important for me to keep the biblical message pure.
40						For me, the Bible is a great way to connect with Christ.
41						I am deeply moved if unchurched people are touched by Jesus' love.
42						It is important for me that Christians don't conform to the world.
43						I would rather be called a "fanatic" for my trust in God's power than be seen as boring.
44						I am convinced that without deep personal experiences faith cannot be fully expressed.
45						I experience Christian rituals as life-altering encounters with God.
46						I frequently perceive God's presence in the "everyday" aspects of life where other people see nothing spiritual.
47						I am skeptical toward a faith that constantly offers "easy solutions."
48						It is important to me that my faith does not depend on momentary feelings.
49						Throughout the day, Scripture verses often come to my mind.
50						One of my greatest desires is to respond to the hurts and needs of unchurched people.
51						I enjoy worshiping God in an environment without decor.
52						For me it is important to feel the presence of God.
53						Silence is very helpful to me in seeking the face of God.
54						Rhythm and repetition in life help me to grow in my understanding of God.
	1	2	3	4	5	

The following statement applies to me:

	not at all	slightly	moderately	to a large extent	very much	
55						I like to use all of my senses (touch, smell, taste, sight, hearing) to encounter God.
56						It is important for my faith that my mind is regularly stimulated.
57						I feel close to God when I sense that God's truth is being communicated in an uncompromising manner.
58						I strongly sense God's presence when applying his Word.
59						I believe that the Christian faith comes alive primarily in giving away what you have received.
60						As part of my Christian testimony, I deliberately try to adopt a simple lifestyle.
61						It is important for me to get direct guidance from the Lord.
62						I feel very close to God whenever he quietly touches my heart.
63						For me, pre-written prayers are very appealing.
64						I enjoy being surrounded by physical objects that have a spiritual meaning.
65						Hardly anything nurtures my faith more than several hours of uninterrupted study or reflection time.
66						Feeling secure in my beliefs is very important to me.
67						My daily decisions are strongly influenced by biblical concepts.
68						I enjoy caring for people outside of the church.
69						In order to be available to God, I try to abstain from worldly things.
70						Prayers for supernatural healing are appealing to me.
71						It is important for me to feel God's presence within me.
72						Places of worship that radiate awe and majesty are very appealing to me.

How to evaluate the Spiritual Style Test

Having answered all of the questions, you can now begin the evaluation. It is quite simple if you follow the four steps explained below:

Step 1: Collect the raw data

Using the following scoring grid, enter the numbers (1-5) that correspond to your answers on the questionnaire (pages 65-68). These numbers are found at the bottom of each column.

Now add up the eight numbers in each row of the table below. Write the result for each row in the *Total* field. This will give you a "raw value" for each style.

								Total	Name of style
1	10	19	28	37	46	55	64		Sensory
2	11	20	29	38	47	56	65		Rational
3	12	21	30	39	48	57	66		Doctrinal
4	13	22	31	40	49	58	67		Scripture-driven
5	14	23	32	41	50	59	68		Sharing
6	15	24	33	42	51	60	69		Ascetic
7	16	25	34	43	52	61	70		Enthusiastic
8	17	26	35	44	53	62	71		Mystical
9	18	27	36	45	54	63	72		Sacramental

Note that these values do not represent the results of the *Spiritual Style Test*. To find out which style is most strongly developed in your life—and which one is the least—you need to transfer the raw data calculated above into the "normation table" found on page 70. The scientific normation has been developed by our Institute on the basis of inter-denominational sample groups in 62 countries.

In order to do the normation, please turn to the next page.

Profile values		70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100	101	102	103	104	105	106	107	108	109	110	111	112	113	114	115	116	117	118	119	120	121	122	123	124	125	126	127	128	129	130																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																													
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How to evaluate the *Spiritual Style Test* (continued)

Step 2: Transfer the raw data to the normation table

After completing the scoring grid (step 1), transfer the totals for each style onto the normation table on the left. For each item, mark the number yielded by the scoring grid. For example, if the scoring grid shows a total of 27 for *Rational*, you should mark the number 27 in the normation table for the row labeled *Rational*. If the corresponding number does not appear, simply mark the next highest number.

Step 3: View the results

The normation table now shows you which style has the highest profile value, and which has the lowest (the *profile values* are the numbers in the black row at the top of the normation table). Write the name of each style into the table below, starting with the one that has the highest profile value, and ending with the one that has the lowest. Write the profile value of each one into the right column of the table.

Name of the style	Profile value
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____
5. _____	_____
6. _____	_____
7. _____	_____
8. _____	_____
9. <i>Roller</i> _____	_____

Step 4: Answer the evaluation questions and fill in the table on page 73

Now move on to page 71 and respond to the five evaluation questions. That will enable you to fill in the table on page 73.

Five evaluation questions

Evaluation Question 1: What is your native style?

Every Christian has *one* predominant style, which I refer to as their native style. Even when all nine styles have achieved relatively close values, there is always one style that is more strongly developed than the other eight. If you have more than one style with identical highest values, do the following to each. Add to it the values of its two neighboring styles. Your native style is then the one that has the highest total.

For example, if the sacramental and the Scripture-driven styles have the same profile values, for the sacramental style you would add together the values of the two neighbor styles, "mystical" and "sensory." For the Scripture-driven style, you would add up the values of the two neighbor styles, "doctrinal" and "sharing." This will indicate whether the sacramental or the Scripture-driven style—in spite of identical values—is your native style.

Evaluation Question 2: In which direction does your native style lean?

There is no pure style; every style has a certain tendency toward one of its neighbor styles. Based on the test results, it is easy to find out the direction in which your native style leans; Simply identify which of the two neighbor styles has the higher value. Let's assume your native style is the sacramental style, and the sensory style has a higher value than the mystical style. In this case the exact description of your native style would be this: the sensory wing of the sacramental style. This fine-tuning is important in order to later choose the exact opposite style (step 4).

Evaluation Question 3: What is your style family?

In some situations it is helpful to focus not so much on one's individual style, but on the style family as a whole.

- If the *sensory* or *rational* style is your native style, you are part of the **green** style family (which also encompasses, to a lesser extent, the *sacramental* and the *doctrinal* styles).
- If the *Scripture-driven* or *sharing* style is your native style, you are part of the **red** style family (which also encompasses, to a lesser extent, the *doctrinal* and the *ascetic* styles).
- If the *mystical* or *enthusiastic* style is your native style, you are part of the **blue** style family (which also encompasses, to a lesser extent, the *ascetic* and the *sacramental* styles).
- If the *sacramental* style is your native style, you are part of the **aesthetic** style family (which also encompasses, to a lesser extent, the *mystical* and the *sensory* styles).
- If the *doctrinal* style is your native style, you are part of the **dogmatic** style family (which also encompasses, to a lesser extent, the *rational* and the *Scripture-driven* styles).
- If the *ascetic* style is your native style, you are part of the **ethical** style family (which also encompasses, to a lesser extent, the *sharing* and the *enthusiastic* styles).

Test normation:

Every book in the NCD Discipleship Resources series contains one major test which helps you identify your starting point in the area of the respective theme (i.e. a "Three-Color Gift Test" in the book, "The 3 Colors of Ministry," the "Fruit of the Spirit Test" in the book, "The 3 Colors of Love"). All of these tests are based on a scientific normation derived from comprehensive international samples. Exact results are only available by way of such a normation. "Tests" that do not have a normation or that are conducted on the basis of inadequate data (e.g. based on samples that are too small or too homogeneous), should not be used. Most Christians take the test results very seriously, some even allow them to determine plans for their life. Because of this, wrong or imprecise results present an ethical problem, comparable to doctrinal heresies.

In other words, your style can be assigned to more than one style family, as the families overlap. Depending on the context (group discussion, mentoring, interdenominational encounters, etc.), it will be helpful to sometimes focus on one style family, at another time on another style family. For instance, if you have the sensory style, it may be comforting for some people to know that you are part of the green style family as they are, but it might be challenging to another group that you are part of the aesthetic style family.

Evaluation Question 4: What is your opposite style?

When it comes to Level B growth, you need to focus on the style that is located opposite your native style. Since your native style has two opposite styles, it is important to know, in which direction your native style leans (see Evaluation Question 2). Let's assume you have the mystical style. Then your two opposite styles are the doctrinal and the Scripture-driven styles. Which one should you focus on? If your mystical style leans more to the sacramental style, then your opposite pole is the Scripture-driven style; if it leans more to the enthusiastic style, your opposite style would be the doctrinal style.

Don't forget that the goal of Level B growth is *not* to focus on your weakest style, but on the style opposite your native style. That makes a huge difference. While in some cases, your opposite style may be identical to your weakest style, it could also be your second most developed style. The closeness of your native and opposite style is a strong indicator of your progress in spiritual maturity.

Evaluation Question 5: What is the style of your church?

As explained in the box on page 74, it is helpful to conduct a Spiritual Style Profile for a whole church. By doing so you can easily identify the most strongly developed style of your church, which usually shapes the climate of the church.

NCD Coach:

Presently, there are NCD National Partners in about 70 countries. Most of them have established a network of NCD Coaches who have the task of supporting local churches in the practical implementation of Natural Church Development. In contrast to spiritual mentors who, in the context of the NCD network, help individual Christians in their spiritual growth process, NCD Coaches usually deal with whole churches or leaders of these churches. Several studies have demonstrated that utilizing a coach significantly increases the potential of success.

If you have this information on hand, fill in your church's predominant style in the table on page 73.

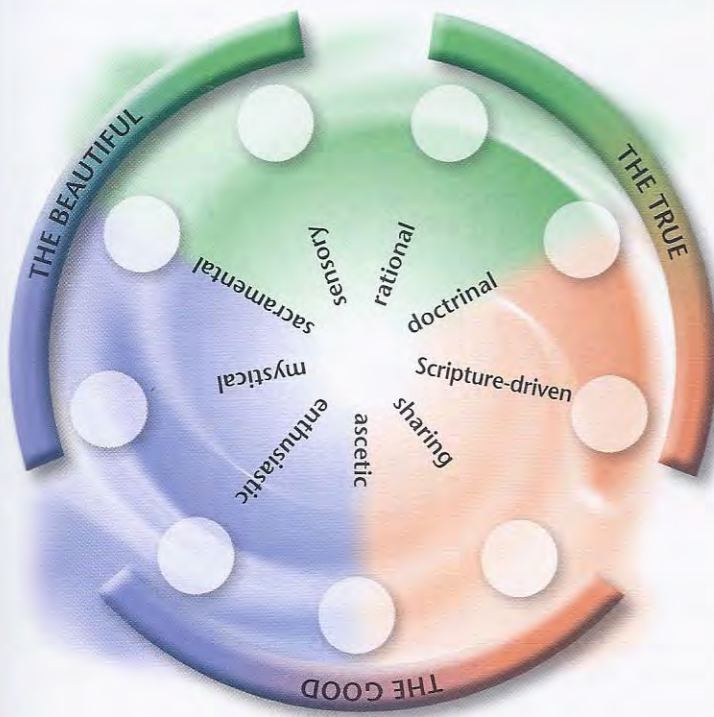
Comparing your native style with the predominant style of your church can help you know how to interact with your church environment in order to experience further growth. If your church's predominant style matches your native style, you will have to follow a different path than if your native style is different. You'll find more on this topic on page 176.

This is not a personality profile

Always remember that the Spiritual Style Test doesn't test your personality type, but simply describes how you encounter God. One's personality type and spiritual style type are not necessarily identical. There are people who are markedly rational in most areas of their life, but in their approach to God they don't display the rational style, but maybe the mystical or enthusiastic style. Though personality type and spiritual style can be close to each other, you shouldn't take this for granted.

There is another difference. In contrast to a personality test (in which the results are often seen as unchangeable), the results of the Spiritual Style Test can change relatively quickly, especially if you deliberately work on your opposite style. You

will see the effects of this change process if you do the test repeatedly. The present result simply describes your current *starting point*. One to two years from now your starting point might be altogether different.



In order to interpret the data it is not only important to know which style is strongest and which is weakest, but also to understand the relationship that the individual styles have to one another within the Trinitarian Compass. Therefore, write the numbers 1-9 into the white circles (1 for your most strongly developed style, 2 for the second strongest, etc.). Take the data from the table on page 70, as it indicates the exact sequence.

1. My native style:

1. Sensory

2. The wing of my native style:

2. Sensory

3. My style family/families:

1. Good

4. My opposite style:

2. Sensory

5. The predominant style of my church:

1. Sensory

Once you have answered the Evaluation Questions (pages 71-72), you will be able to fill in the table to the left.

Remember that, according to your preference, you can include one or more style families in answer to question 3.

In order to answer question 5 ("the predominant style of my church") you will need the results of the Spiritual Style Test on the level of your whole church. If that hasn't been done yet, simply leave the field next to question 5 blank.

For this reason I avoid speaking about mystics, sacramentalists, enthusiasts, etc. You may *have* a sacramental style, but you *are not* a sacramentalist (see page 32). It would be helpful for you to stick to this language as well. People who ignore this distinction communicate that they treat the typology of spiritual styles as a more or less static concept, rather than seeing the test results as an indication of a starting point for change and spiritual growth.

Name of style	Favorite location	Motto	Focus	Key Scripture reference
sensory		enjoying the works of God	beauty & perception	<i>The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. (Ps. 19:1)</i>
rational		understanding the nature of God	logic & science	<i>By wisdom the Lord laid the earth's foundation, by understanding he set the heavens in place. (Prov. 3:19)</i>
doctrinal		thinking correctly about God	truth & doctrine	<i>See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. (Col. 2:8)</i>
Scripture-driven		applying the Word of God	Bible study & discipleship	<i>Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom. (Col. 3:16)</i>
sharing		passing on the grace of God	evangelism & service	<i>We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. (2 Cor. 5:20)</i>
ascetic		developing discipline for God	sacrifice & inner values	<i>I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize. (1 Cor. 9:27)</i>
enthusiastic		celebrating the power of God	power & excitement	<i>For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power. (1 Cor. 4:20)</i>
mystical		resting in the presence of God	mystery & devotion	<i>We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. (Rom. 8:26)</i>
sacramental		expressing the incarnation of God	liturgy & symbolism	<i>The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. (John 1:14)</i>

Overview of the nine spiritual styles: Each style emphasizes one specific aspect of the biblical message. In other words: Each of the nine styles is "biblical," and each one needs to be complemented by the other styles.

frequently misunderstand green Christians' enthusiasm for the senses and reason. For them these two dimensions are purely "worldly." They don't understand that green spiritualities strive to encounter God in the midst of this earthiness.

The Bible indicates the perils of green spirituality. The Old Testament reports that Solomon patronized the arts and sciences, two interests of green spirituality. The time of Solomon was characterized by intense international relationships, extensive trading, the marriage with Pharaoh's daughter, and a huge harem with numerous foreigners whose gods

Name of style	Strengths	Perils	Neglect	Opposite styles
sensory	• appreciating beauty • enjoying God's creation	• preoccupation with aesthetics • dependency on external things	• service • inner values	• sharing • ascetic
rational	• striving for explanations • utilizing science	• intellectual pride • rationalism	• sacrificial living • the trans-rational dimension	• ascetic • enthusiastic
doctrinal	• emphasizing sound doctrine • relating to dogmatic systems	• faith confused with doctrine • dry abstractness	• personal experiences • nurturing the inner life	• enthusiastic • mystical
Scripture-driven	• faithfulness to the Bible • proclaiming God's Word	• reducing God's Word to Scripture • exaggerated view of the verbal	• listening to your inner voice • physical expressions	• mystical • sacramental
sharing	• focusing on outsiders • evangelizing people	• overlooking the needs of insiders • reducing faith to "soul winning"	• church traditions • God's creation	• sacramental • sensory
ascetic	• freedom from worldly things • sacrificial living	• negative view of the world • irrational suffering	• enjoying God's creation • common sense	• sensory • rational
enthusiastic	• openness to the supernatural • striving to see God's power	• negative view of the natural • accepting unbiblical practices	• scientific reasoning • sound doctrine	• rational • doctrinal
mystical	• cultivating the mysterious • focus on the inner person	• exaggerated view of the mysterious • confusing feelings with God	• logic and systems • Biblical standards	• doctrinal • Scripture-driven
sacramental	• expressing faith physically • appreciating traditions and rites	• magic view of sacraments • insensitivity toward outsiders	• the verbal dimension • the needs of the unchurched	• Scripture-driven • sharing