



Spiritual styles and me; Canterbury September 20th 2014

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Research undertaken by David Csinos¹ into the sort of physical environment that best facilitates Children's spiritual development indicated that children- and adults- can be grouped into four different approaches to our spirituality. Csinos named these four approaches 'Spiritual styles', and developed his work with Joyce Bellous and Denise Peltomacki to produce a questionnaire booklet and training event that enable others to discover their preferred Spiritual style and the impact that style has on their life and work, including worshipping preference.

Working through the questionnaire and unpacking the results takes a minimum of two hours. Today we will merely scratch the surface and whet your appetites for more!

NB the Styles have no correlation with Myers-Briggs, Learning styles or Enneagram types.

The four types;

We live in an environment that favours academia, the extrovert, the individual with drive, the well paid and well connected. As Christians, we believe that all are equal before God.

There is no pecking order in Spiritual styles, but we will look at them in the order that Bellous, Csinos and Peltomacki use in the questionnaire. (I have a theory that this favours their personal styles!) None is 'better' than any other, but you will spot the one that western society values above the other three.

Word style

- Word and accuracy are more important than aesthetics.
- When the words are right, the world makes sense.
- Ethical living of great significance. Emotion not relevant to truth.
- Extreme cases don't recognise that thinking and feeling work together.
- Contribution comes from intellectual wealth.

This person may be in a highly paid job, such as Law or Accountancy, or less well paid, such as Bishops. Academics often favour this style. An extreme Word style person may be on the Autistic Spectrum. The type of Church tradition Word people enjoy is often more towards the Evangelical wing of the church. The aesthetic of the building is less important, so they may be in a church that has little visual decoration. They enjoy well structured sermons, and will argue over fine points of theology. They make good Diocesan Bishops, Archdeacons and Churchwardens, esp if the Vicar is Emotion style.

Emotion style

- Compassionate, relational
- Use language to express feelings rather than facts
- Often charismatic leaders. This person may refuse to be accountable for the hold they have over their peers.
- Decisions may be made following hunches, thus steering a group towards possible harm.
- Will often clash with word.

This person may be in one of the 'Caring professions' so may be poorly paid. They may not have been successful at school in terms of qualifications, and so have low self esteem.

□ ¹ 'Children's Ministry that fits' David Csinos, pub 2011
□ [International Journal of Children's Spirituality Issue 3 August 2009 , pages 213 – 224](#)

Emotion people are found across the whole spectrum of the Church. They enjoy singing and the visual impact of a building. They often 'drift' off during a sermon, following a tangent of their own, and so come and go during a service. They enjoy the fellowship over coffee as much as the formal worship. Many are Youth and Children's leaders, or work in less prestigious roles within the Church.

If one Churchwarden is Word, and your Vicar is not Emotion, you need to find an Emotion Churchwarden to follow up the more pastoral side of church life. Suffragan bishops may be Emotion people to compliment the Word Diocesan.

Symbol style

- Withdraws from trying to express outwardly what is perceived inwardly.
- Life is a mystery, more felt than spoken.
- Combines emotion, symbol, solitude, ritual and 'the music of the spheres'.
- Aim to form a connection with the world that doesn't need to be expressed through words.
- May live in quiet and isolation.

Symbol people are found throughout life, but not often in Churches! They love being outside, and may work in an area that means they are outside and alone much of the time

Within the Church, they enjoy (silent) retreats and events focussing on personal spirituality more than the words of liturgy. Symbol style people enjoy worship that includes silence, or the more Anglo Catholic high aesthetic or Orthodox smoke and prayer. Lots of people who choose to live as a religious have a Symbol style.

They may well be introverted and highly creative. Symbol people often have a few very good friends, but are comfortable with their own company.

Action style

- What one does, not what one says.
- Desire for justice, world changing conditions.
- Single minded, passionate, observant and impatient for change.
- Sometimes unable to express their needs through language

Action people often work for NGOs, in advocacy or development.

They like a church that has a high profile for social action such as running a Food bank, Street Pastors, soup run. They ensure PCCs actually commit to action rather than just talking about it, and if your Vicar is not this style, may feel harassing in their enthusiasm to get things done. They are often Youth and Children's workers.

In conclusion

Your own personal style preference will influence how you approach the whole of your life. If you devise worship, you will do it in your style preference. How you preach or hear a sermon will be affected by your style preference. You will tend to be most comfortable with those who share your preference, although life partners are often complimentary.

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