THE BELEAGUERED BELIEVER'S GUIDES

MANY MEMBERS ONE BODY

FAITH FOR EVERY KIND OF MIND



Faith OVER FACTIONS

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Faith OVER FACTIONS

For everyone who wanders and feels far from home.

For the ones who left when the noise got too loud, and the ones still sitting in the back row wondering if they belong.

For the solo believer, the doubter, the tired, and the ones who feel alone in a crowded church.

You are not lost. You are on your way home.
You are not the only one. This is for you.

About Faith Over Factions

Faith Over Factions is a place for the spiritually homeless: people who still love Jesus but can't find Him in the noise of institutional religion or partisan faith. Everything here is free. No email address, no paywall, no algorithm deciding what you see.

You'll find reflections, portraits of Christians who resisted when it cost them something, devotionals for unsteady days, and a private Faith Journal for the questions you're not ready to say out loud. We don't take sides in the culture war. We take Jesus at His word and try to follow Him with honesty, humility, and a lot of grace for the stumbling.

Pull up a chair. You're welcome here.

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THE BELEAGUERED BELIEVER'S GUIDES

Many Members, One Body: Faith for Every Kind of Mind

Scripture quotations are from the New Living Translation unless noted.

Part One: Honest Ground

1. For the One Told to Come Out of Your Shell

Maybe it was the greeting time. The music stopped, the pastor said, "Turn to the people around you and tell them they're loved," and you stood there with your hand out and your stomach in a knot until it was over.

Maybe it was the small group leader who asked, kindly enough, why you never shared. Or the youth pastor who told you that God had big plans for you once you came out of your shell. Maybe the altar call went long one night, with the music swelling and the invitation repeated, and you stayed in your seat. Afterward someone asked whether everything was all right between you and God.

Maybe your church was the loud kind. The band played, the floor shook, and the people around you jumped, shouted and danced in the aisles. You loved God as much as any of them. You just wanted to stand still with your eyes closed, or sit down and let the song wash over you. Then the worship leader said from the stage that somebody in the room was holding back, and you were sure he meant you. Afterward someone came over to pray that whatever was blocking you would break. Someone else asked, gently, whether you had ever really received the Holy Spirit.

Or maybe it went the other way. You were the one who cried during the hymns, and the people in your pew shifted in their seats. You laughed too loud in the fellowship hall. You couldn't sit still through a long liturgy, and somebody's grandmother let you know it. You raised your hands in a church where nobody raised their hands, once.

Either way, the message was the same. There is a right way to be a Christian, and it isn't quite you.

One shape of holy

Most churches never say this out loud. Many would be surprised to hear it. But nearly every congregation carries a picture of what a mature believer looks like, and that picture usually has a temperament.

In many evangelical churches, the picture is outgoing. The mature believer prays out loud without notes, shares a testimony without being asked, signs up for the greeting team and thrives in a small group. In 2009 a Presbyterian minister named Adam McHugh wrote a book about what this does to quiet people, *Introverts in the Church*. He described introverts who had come to suspect that their temperament itself was a spiritual shortcoming.

In many Pentecostal and charismatic churches, the picture adds visible fervor. Raised hands, a loud amen, tears at the altar and a body that moves with the music are taken as signs that the Spirit is at work. Stillness can be read as resistance, as though a quiet worshiper must be holding something back from God. Plenty of people in those churches love Jesus with their whole bodies, and that love is real. The harm comes when one way of showing it becomes the test of whether you have the Spirit at all.

In other churches the picture runs the opposite way. The mature believer is composed. Reverent means quiet, and quiet means still. Strong feeling is suspect, and a person who weeps through the Creed or can't keep their knees from bouncing during the homily gets a look.

Both pictures tend to grow out of whoever was in charge and what came naturally to them. Scripture draws a much wider picture.

"If the whole body were an eye"

Paul wrote to a church that ranked its people. In Corinth, some spiritual gifts looked more impressive than others, and the believers who had them felt more important. Paul answered with a picture of a body:

> *If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything? But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it.*
>
> 1 Corinthians 12:17-18

Notice the last line. *Just where he wants it.* Paul doesn't say God tolerates the variety, or that he will sort it out eventually. The variety was the design.

Chapter 3 spends more time with this passage. For now it is enough to say that a church full of one temperament would be like a body made entirely of eyes. It could see beautifully, and it would be deaf.

A word about personality tests

Many readers will have taken a personality test at church or work, and some will know their type by heart. This guide doesn't use any of the popular systems as its framework, and it is worth a short, respectful word about why.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator sorts people into sixteen types. Psychologists have long questioned how stable those types are. In 1993 the psychologist David Pittenger reported that when people retake the test after as little as five weeks, as many as half of them land in a different type. The Enneagram is often presented as ancient Christian wisdom, but historians trace the modern system to Oscar Ichazo and Claudio Naranjo in the late 1960s and 1970s. In 2022 Ronald Huggins examined the claim that the desert father Evagrius used it and found that the claim doesn't hold up.

None of that makes these tools useless. If your type helped you understand yourself or your marriage, keep what helped. This guide just doesn't build on them. It uses Scripture's own people instead: a busy host and her quiet sister, a king who danced and a woman who prayed without a sound, a fisherman who always spoke first and a disciple who needed to see for himself. Where it uses research, it sticks to traits that hold up when they are measured, mainly introversion and extroversion.

What you didn't choose

Temperament is partly inherited. In 2015, Tena Vukasović and Denis Bratko pooled the results of behavior genetic studies involving more than 100,000 people and estimated that about 40 percent of the differences in personality between people trace to genes. The rest comes from everything else in a life: family, culture, wounds, choices, years.

So you didn't pick the way you are wired to meet the world, and you aren't locked into every part of it either. Both of those things are true of the people in Scripture. God never turned Peter into John. He did change Peter.

That is the line this guide tries to walk. Your temperament isn't a sin. It isn't an excuse either. Every temperament has its own gifts, and every one has its own temptations, and grace goes to work on both.

Fit and harm

Another guide in this series, *Finding Christ in the Land of Christians*, makes a point that belongs here too. A church can be safe and sound and full of good people and still be a poor fit for you. Some people come alive in an ordered liturgy, and others feel hemmed in by it. Some love a loud, warm crowd. Others need a quiet back row and a church that will leave them alone for a while.

A poor fit is a real reason to look elsewhere. It isn't a reason to warn other people away. And it is never a reason to decide that something is wrong with your soul because you don't thrive in a room built for a different kind of person.

Who this is for

This is for the quiet ones who were told they were cold, or that they were holding back from the Spirit, and for the loud ones who were told to tone it down. It is for the doer who was told to slow down and be more like Mary, and the thinker whose questions were taken as rebellion. It is for anyone whose brain works differently and who spent years trying to look like everyone else in the pew.

It is also for pastors and church members who want to make room for people who don't look like them. You are welcome here, too.

What lies ahead

Part One: Honest Ground names the wound. Then it looks at the mask many believers learn to wear to get through a Sunday, and at a word Jesus borrowed from the theater.

Part Two: Many Members reads Scripture's own cast of temperaments: one body with many parts, two sisters in Bethany, a king who danced and a woman who prayed in silence, and three men who met God in very different moods. God meets each of them as they are, and none of them stays the same.

Part Three: Brains That Work Differently turns to autism and ADHD. It looks at where personality ends and wiring begins, what a Sunday morning costs some people, and what it takes to set the mask down.

Part Four: Practice gathers prayer practices from across the whole Church, chosen with different temperaments and different brains in mind. One of them is for hands that won't stay still.

Each chapter ends with three questions. They're offered, not assigned.

FOR REFLECTION

1. Which of the opening pictures comes closest to your experience? Write down the church, the year and what was said, if you remember.
2. What did your church hold up as the picture of a mature believer? Which parts of that picture fit you, and which never did?
3. Paul says God put each part "just where he wants it." What is one thing about the way you are made that you have treated as a defect? Write it down.

2. The Mask

In the theaters of the ancient Greek world, actors wore masks. One actor might play several parts in a single play, and the mask told the audience who he was supposed to be.

The Greek word for that kind of actor was *hypokritēs*. In older Greek it could mean one who answers or interprets, and then a stage player. By the time of the New Testament it had also come to mean a pretender: someone whose face and heart didn't match.

Jesus picked up that word and used it again and again.

Three times in a few verses

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus talks about three ordinary parts of religious life: giving, praying and fasting. Each time, he uses the actor's word.

"When you give to someone in need, don't do as the hypocrites do—blowing trumpets in the synagogues and streets to call attention to their acts of charity!" (Matthew 6:2). "When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them" (Matthew 6:5). And when you fast, don't be like the hypocrites who "try to look miserable and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting" (Matthew 6:16).

Look at what the actors in these verses want. *Where everyone can see them. So people will admire them.* They play holy for an audience, and Jesus says the applause is all the reward they will get.

A different mask

Many people reading this guide wear a mask too, but for a different reason.

The introvert arrives early to help at the welcome table and acts excited for an hour, then sits in the car afterward to recover before driving home. The one who feels everything has learned to keep a dry face at the altar. The quiet worshiper in a lively church has learned to lift their hands on cue and clap on the beat, so nobody comes over to pray about what is blocking them. The questioner nods along in Bible study and

saves the real questions for a notebook nobody reads. The restless one sits on their hands through the sermon and doesn't hear a word of it, because all their effort goes into looking still.

Some of you learned to mask before you learned to read. For you, the mask may have less to do with temperament than with the way your brain is wired. Part Three of this guide is for you, and it will take that up in full.

Here is the difference, and it comes straight from the text. The hypocrites Jesus described wore the mask to be admired. Most masking believers wear it to survive the room. One is a performance for applause. The other is a way of staying in a place you love without being sent out of it.

Sometimes the same church that required the mask then judges the person behind it. A quiet man who forced himself to be outgoing for years finally stops, and people say he has grown cold. A woman who kept her doubts to herself for a decade finally says them out loud, and she is told her faith was never real. They asked for the performance and then called the performer a fake.

What the LORD looks at

When God sent the prophet Samuel to anoint a new king from among the sons of Jesse, Samuel looked at the oldest son, Eliab, and thought he had found him. God stopped him:

> *But the LORD said to Samuel, "Don't judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The LORD doesn't see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."*
>
> 1 Samuel 16:7

The person who needed correcting in that scene was a prophet, the most spiritually experienced man in the room. He was impressed by the wrong thing. Seven sons passed in front of him, and none of them was the one. The one God had chosen wasn't even in the house. Nobody had thought to bring David in from the sheep.

People still judge by outward appearance, including the appearance of devotion. God sees past the mask in both directions. He sees the hypocrite's heart behind the pious face, and he sees the faithful heart behind a face that has been working very hard just to stay in the room.

The tiredness

It is worth stopping to say how tiring this is.

Masking costs energy, and the bill comes due later. It comes due as the Sunday afternoon nap you can't skip, the headache after small group, or the dread that settles in on Saturday night. It can come due as a loneliness that is hard to explain to anyone, because you are surrounded by people who like you and none of them has met you.

If that is where you are, you don't have to fix it today. You can start by saying it to God plainly. He has already seen behind the mask, and he hasn't looked away.

If the tiredness has turned into something heavier, such as depression, anxiety, panic or a sense of being emptied out that doesn't lift with rest, please talk to a counselor or a doctor. Getting that help is one of the ways God cares for his people. It is no failure of faith.

Stretching and hiding

One more thing needs saying, so that this chapter doesn't become an excuse.

Love will sometimes ask you to do things that don't come naturally. A quiet person may cross a room to greet a newcomer who is standing alone. A talkative person may sit on a hard question for a week before speaking. That kind of stretching is growth, chosen freely, for the sake of someone else.

The mask is different. It's worn out of fear, all the time, so that nobody finds out who you are. Growth stretches you and then lets you rest. The mask never comes off.

FOR REFLECTION

1. What does your mask look like at church? Describe one thing you do there that you would never do if you felt safe.
2. When does the bill come due for you: Sunday afternoon, Monday morning, or somewhere else? Write down what it feels like.
3. Think of one time love asked you to stretch beyond your temperament. How was that different from wearing the mask?

Part Two: Many Members

3. One Body, Many Parts

The church in Corinth was gifted, noisy and divided. Its members had lined up behind rival teachers. They were suing each other in public courts. Some treated the Lord's Supper as their own dinner, hurrying to eat without sharing, so that "some go hungry while others get drunk" (1 Corinthians 11:21). Paul's answer was blunt: "If you are really hungry, eat at home" (1 Corinthians 11:34). And they had started ranking each other by which spiritual gifts looked most impressive.

Paul's answer to that last problem fills three chapters of his first letter to them (1 Corinthians 12-14). It begins with a picture almost everyone could understand: a human body.

The foot and the hand

Paul imagines the parts of a body talking. Some of them feel they don't belong:

> *If the foot says, "I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand," that does not make it any less a part of the body.*
>
> 1 Corinthians 12:15

Many quiet people have had the foot's thought in church. *I can't do what they do. I don't light up a room. I don't pray like that. Maybe I don't really belong here.* Paul lets the feeling stand and points out that it changes nothing. The foot is still part of the body, whether it feels like it or not.

Then he turns the picture around and speaks to the parts that feel superior:

> *The eye can never say to the hand, "I don't need you." The head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you."*
>
> 1 Corinthians 12:21

Both mistakes are possible in the same church. Some members feel they don't belong, while others act as if certain members aren't needed. Paul refuses both.

The parts that seem weakest

Then he says something that would have surprised his readers:

> *In fact, some parts of the body that seem weakest and least important are actually the most necessary. And the parts we regard as less honorable are those we clothe with the greatest care.*
>
> 1 Corinthians 12:22-23

Look at the word *seem*. Paul is talking about appearances, about how the parts look to the other parts. The ones that look least impressive may be the ones the body can least do without.

Every congregation has people like this. One woman never speaks in a meeting, and she is the only one who notices when an elderly member stops coming. One man can't make small talk to save his life, and he has fixed the church furnace every winter for twenty years. A teenager who never sits still is the first one carrying chairs when the potluck ends. They don't fit the picture of a mature believer, and the body would be in real trouble without them.

Different gifts

Paul made the same point to the believers in Rome, a church he had never visited:

"In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well" (Romans 12:6). He goes on to list several: prophecy, serving, teaching, encouraging, giving, leading and showing kindness. The list is varied on purpose. Some of those gifts need a crowd. Others need a quiet room or a single conversation at a kitchen table.

Temperament isn't the same thing as a spiritual gift. But it shapes how a gift gets used. An extroverted encourager may lift a whole room. An introverted encourager may write the letter someone keeps in a drawer for thirty years. Both are the gift of encouragement.

Energy, not holiness

Introversion and extroversion are among the most studied traits in personality research. The core difference has to do with energy and stimulation. Extroverts tend to be energized by people, activity and noise. Introverts tend to tire of all three sooner, and they recharge in quiet. Most people fall somewhere in between, and almost everyone has some of each.

None of that is moral. An extrovert who loves a crowded room isn't more spiritual for it. An introvert who slips out before the fellowship hour isn't less loving. They need different things to keep going, and a wise church makes room for both: a time to greet and a place to sit quietly, a small group and a prayer room, a microphone and a notebook.

Even Paul

One more detail is worth noticing. The man who wrote these chapters didn't fit his critics' picture of a leader either.

In a later letter to the same church, Paul quotes what some of them were saying about him: "Paul's letters are demanding and forceful, but in person he is weak, and his speeches are worthless!" (2 Corinthians 10:10). Scholars disagree about exactly what lay behind the complaint, whether it was his appearance, his health, his speaking style or simply that he refused to perform like the traveling orators the Corinthians admired. Whatever it was, Paul didn't impress them in person.

God used him anyway. The apostle who gave the Church its picture of one body with many parts was, by his own critics' account, one of the parts that seemed weakest.

FOR REFLECTION

1. Have you ever had the foot's thought, "I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand"? Where were you, and what made you think it?
2. Name one person in a church you have known whose part "seemed weakest" but turned out to be necessary. What did they do?
3. Where does your energy come from, and where does it go? Write down one thing at church that fills you and one thing that drains you.

4. Martha and Mary, Read Again

If you are a doer, you have probably heard this story used against you.

Jesus and his disciples stop in a village on the way to Jerusalem, and a woman named Martha welcomes him into her home. Then the story turns:

> *Her sister, Mary, sat at the Lord's feet, listening to what he taught. But Martha was distracted by the big dinner she was preparing. She came to Jesus and said, "Lord, doesn't it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come and help me."*
>
> Luke 10:39-40

Jesus answers, "My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details! There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:41-42).

For much of church history, preachers read the two sisters as two ways of life, the active and the contemplative, and ranked Mary's higher. In many churches today the lesson comes out as something simpler: be a Mary, not a Martha. Doers hear that their temperament is the problem.

What Jesus actually said

Read slowly, and the story says something more careful than that.

Jesus doesn't criticize Martha for cooking. Somebody had to feed a houseful of guests, and she was the one who had opened her home to them. What he names is her state of mind: *worried and upset*. Luke had already said she was *distracted*. The trouble was that the work had swallowed her, and that she had turned on her sister and on Jesus himself. "Doesn't it seem unfair to you?"

He also says her name with great tenderness. In Luke's Greek, Jesus says it twice, "Martha, Martha," which the NLT renders as "My dear Martha." A rebuke said like that sounds very different from a verdict.

And he defends Mary's choice while leaving Martha her own. Nowhere does he tell her to put down the bread and sit. He only says that Mary won't be taken from the place she has chosen.

Martha goes out to meet him

John's Gospel tells another story about the same two sisters, and it often gets left out when Luke's story is preached.

Their brother Lazarus is sick, and by the time Jesus arrives in Bethany, he has been dead four days. John says, "When Martha got word that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him. But Mary stayed in the house" (John 11:20).

The temperaments are the same as in Luke. Martha moves, and Mary stays. But this time it is Martha out on the road, face to face with Jesus, and it is Martha who has the conversation that becomes one of the great moments of the Gospels.

She starts with grief and a little accusation: "Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died" (John 11:21). Jesus answers her with theology, the kind of answer a thinker and a doer might want: "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). And Martha answers him back with one of the clearest confessions of faith in all four Gospels:

> *"Yes, Lord," she told him. "I have always believed you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who has come into the world from God."*
>
> John 11:27

Later, Mary comes out too, and she says exactly the same sentence her sister said: "Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died" (John 11:32). With Mary there is no speech. Jesus is moved, and he weeps with her.

Two sisters, same grief, same words. Jesus met each of them in the way she could receive him.

Martha served

One more line comes a chapter later, at a dinner in Bethany after Lazarus has been raised:

"A dinner was prepared in Jesus' honor. Martha served, and Lazarus was among those who ate with him" (John 12:2).

That is all John says about her. Martha is still serving, and no correction follows. In all three scenes, Jesus never once asks her to become her sister.

The kitchen

In the seventeenth century, a lay brother named Lawrence worked for years in the kitchen of a Carmelite monastery in Paris. He wasn't a scholar or a priest. He was clumsy by his own account, and he didn't especially like kitchen work. But he became known for something unusual: he prayed while he worked, all day long, in short words and in simple attention to God.

A visitor recorded their conversations, later published as *The Practice of the Presence of God*. In one of them Lawrence says, "The time of business does not with me differ from the time of prayer." He went on to describe the noise of his kitchen, with several people calling for different things at once, and said he was as much at peace with God there as on his knees.

For doers, that is good news. The kitchen can be holy ground.

Each temperament's temptation

Still, the story does name a real danger, and it is worth being honest about it.

The doer's temptation is Martha's: to let the work swallow you, to measure your worth and other people's by how much gets done, and to resent the ones who seem to be sitting around. "Doesn't it seem unfair?" is a doer's prayer.

The contemplative has a temptation too, though Luke's story doesn't dwell on it. It is the temptation to let others carry the load while you sit, and to think quiet devotion makes you a little more spiritual than the people setting the table.

Jesus loved both sisters. He corrected the one who needed correcting, and he left each of them her own temperament.

FOR REFLECTION

1. Which sister have you been told to be more like? Who told you, and how did it land?
2. Martha was "worried and upset over all these details." What details are swallowing you right now? Name two.
3. Brother Lawrence prayed while he cooked. Pick one ordinary task you will do tomorrow and decide to pray through it. Write down the task and the time.

5. Loud Praise, Quiet Praise

Two scenes from the books of Samuel belong side by side. In one, a king dances in the street with everything he has. In the other, a woman prays in the house of God without making a sound. Both of them are misread by people who should have known better.

David danced

After a first attempt ended in disaster, David brought the Ark of the Covenant, the sign of God's presence with Israel, into Jerusalem. It was a day of music, shouting and sacrifice. "And David danced before the LORD with all his might, wearing a priestly garment" (2 Samuel 6:14).

With all his might. This was no polite sway. The king was leaping in public, and he didn't care how it looked.

His wife cared a great deal:

> *But as the Ark of the LORD entered the City of David, Michal, the daughter of Saul, looked down from her window. When she saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD, she was filled with contempt for him.*
>
> 2 Samuel 6:16

When David came home, she mocked him for making a fool of himself in front of the servant girls. The text leaves room for more going on between them than one afternoon. Michal was Saul's daughter, and her marriage to David had been through politics, separation and loss. But the thing she chose to attack was the way he worshiped.

David didn't back down: "I was dancing before the LORD, who chose me above your father and all his family! He appointed me as the leader of Israel, the people of the LORD, so I celebrate before the LORD. Yes, and I am willing to look even more foolish than this, even to be humiliated in my own eyes!" (2 Samuel 6:21-22).

If you are an expressive worshiper, someone who cries or claps or raises your hands or can't keep still when the music builds, you may know what it is to be looked down on from a window. David's answer is yours to borrow. *I was dancing before the LORD.*

Hannah prayed

Many years earlier, a woman named Hannah went up with her family to worship at the house of the LORD in Shiloh. She had no children, and her husband's other wife mocked her for it year after year. "Hannah was in deep anguish, crying bitterly as she prayed to the LORD" (1 Samuel 1:10).

She prayed silently. The priest on duty, Eli, was sitting by the entrance and watching her. "Seeing her lips moving but hearing no sound, he thought she had been drinking" (1 Samuel 1:13). He told her to get rid of her wine.

The priest, the man whose whole job was prayer, couldn't recognize it when it was quiet. He was used to prayer he could hear.

Hannah answered him with dignity: "Oh no, sir! I haven't been drinking wine or anything stronger. But I am very discouraged, and I was pouring out my heart to the LORD" (1 Samuel 1:15).

Pouring out my heart. There was nothing small about her prayer. It was as full as David's dance, only it happened inside her, where Eli couldn't see it.

If you have been the still one in a room full of dancing, and someone decided your heart must be closed, Hannah's words are yours to borrow. You were pouring out your heart to the LORD. It just didn't make any noise.

Eli, to his credit, changed his mind when he heard her out. "In that case," Eli said, "go in peace! May the God of Israel grant the request you have asked of him" (1 Samuel 1:17). The quiet prayer was answered, and the son she prayed for was Samuel.

Both are in the book

The Psalms make room for both kinds of worshiper, sometimes a few pages apart. One psalm calls out, "Come, everyone! Clap your hands! Shout to God with joyful praise!" (Psalm 47:1). Another sounds like a person sitting very still:

> *Instead, I have calmed and quieted myself, like a weaned child who no longer cries for its mother's milk. Yes, like a weaned child is my soul within me.*
>
> Psalm 131:2

The whole Church has kept both. Pentecostal congregations shout and dance. Quakers sit in silence until someone is moved to speak. Orthodox believers stand through long liturgies full of incense, icons and chant. Catholics kneel in quiet adoration before the altar. Many Protestant churches hold a loud contemporary service at nine and a quiet traditional one at eleven, and some of the people who attend one have never met the people who attend the other.

God receives all of it. No volume is holier than another.

The temptations

Every temperament can turn its way of worship into a weapon.

The expressive worshiper can come to think that what can be seen is what counts, and that the person standing still with folded hands must be cold or unconverted. The quiet worshiper can come to think that reserve is the same as reverence, and look down on the dancers from a window, the way Michal did.

In both stories the trouble sits with the person watching. Michal despised David, and Eli misjudged Hannah. Eli changed his mind once Hannah explained herself. As far as the text tells us, Michal never did.

FOR REFLECTION

1. Are you more like David in worship, or more like Hannah? Describe what your worship looks like on a good day.
2. Have you ever been misread the way Hannah was, or looked down on the way David was? Write down what happened.
3. Whose way of worshiping have you looked down on from your own window? Name the church or the style, and pray for the people in it this week.

6. Peter, Thomas and the Broom Tree

Three men in Scripture show three more temperaments, and God deals with each of them differently. One talks before he thinks. One won't believe anything until he sees it. One runs out of everything and lies down under a tree to die.

Peter speaks first

Peter is the disciple most likely to say what everyone else is only thinking, and some things nobody should say at all.

Right after he has confessed that Jesus is the Messiah, Jesus begins to explain that he will suffer and die. Peter can't take it. "But Peter took him aside and began to reprimand him for saying such things. 'Heaven forbid, Lord,' he said. 'This will never happen to you!'" (Matthew 16:22). Jesus corrects him sharply.

On a mountain, Peter watches Jesus shine with light and sees Moses and Elijah standing with him, and he blurts out an offer to build three shelters. Mark explains why, with what sounds like affection: "He said this because he didn't really know what else to say, for they were all terrified" (Mark 9:6).

After the resurrection, Peter is out fishing when someone recognizes Jesus on the shore. The other disciples bring the boat in. Peter "put on his tunic (for he had stripped for work), jumped into the water, and headed to shore" (John 21:7).

Some readers will recognize themselves. You speak first. You feel things fast and act on them faster. You are often wrong, sometimes embarrassingly, and you are also often the first one in the water.

Jesus never made Peter quiet. On the day of Pentecost, it was Peter who stood up in front of a crowd in Jerusalem and preached the first sermon of the Church (Acts 2:14). The same mouth that had said too much was now saying what needed to be said.

But change came slowly, and the temperament's temptation didn't vanish. Years later in Antioch, Peter stopped eating with Gentile believers when visitors from Jerusalem arrived, and Paul had to confront him in public (Galatians 2:11-14). Impulsive people often swing with whoever is in the room. Grace went to work on Peter for the rest of his life.

Thomas needs to see

Thomas is remembered for one bad week. He deserves a fuller reading.

When Jesus decided to go back to Judea, where people had recently tried to stone him, it was Thomas who said, "Let's go, too—and die with Jesus" (John 11:16). That is loyalty, if a gloomy kind.

When Jesus told the disciples they knew the way to where he was going, Thomas was the one who said what the others were afraid to admit: "No, we don't know, Lord. We have no idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?" (John 14:5). His honest question drew one of the most famous answers Jesus ever gave.

Then came the week after the resurrection. Thomas had missed the first appearance, and he wouldn't take the others' word for it: "I won't believe it unless I see the nail wounds in his hands, put my fingers into them, and place my hand into the wound in his side" (John 20:25).

Eight days later, Jesus came back, and he went straight to Thomas. He didn't lecture him first. He offered him exactly what he had asked for: "Put your finger here, and look at my hands. Put your hand into the wound in my side. Don't be faithless any longer. Believe!" (John 20:27).

And the questioner made what many readers consider the highest confession in John's Gospel. "My Lord and my God!" Thomas exclaimed (John 20:28).

The Orthodox Church remembers that moment every year on the Sunday after Easter, which it calls Thomas Sunday. It has never treated the questioner as an embarrassment.

If you are a Thomas, your questions may be how your faith gets built. Your temperament's temptation lies elsewhere: the questions can harden into cynicism, a refusal to believe anything at all. Thomas asked to see, and when Jesus showed him, he believed and said so.

Under the broom tree

Elijah had just faced down hundreds of false prophets on Mount Carmel. It should have been his greatest day. Then the queen sent word that she would have him killed, and he ran.

> *Then he went on alone into the wilderness, traveling all day. He sat down under a solitary broom tree and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life, for I am no better than my ancestors who have already died."*
>
> 1 Kings 19:4

Some temperaments run high and then crash hard. Some people carry a heaviness that others don't, and feel things all the way down. Elijah may or may not have been one of them. What the text shows is a man who had nothing left.

Look at what God did first. He didn't correct Elijah's theology or remind him of his calling. "Then he lay down and slept under the broom tree. But as he was sleeping, an angel touched him and told him, 'Get up and eat!'" (1 Kings 19:5). There was bread baked on hot stones and a jar of water. Elijah ate and lay down again.

Then the angel came back a second time: "Get up and eat some more, or the journey ahead will be too much for you" (1 Kings 19:7).

God fed him twice and let him sleep. And he admitted, through the angel, that the road ahead really was too much without help. What God said to Elijah later on the mountain is another story, and another guide in this series tells it. Under the broom tree, the first word was bread.

If you find yourself praying Elijah's prayer, if "I have had enough" has turned into thoughts of not wanting to be alive, please tell someone today. In the United States you can call or text 988 to reach the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. A counselor or a doctor can help you carry what you can't carry alone. Reaching out is one of the ways God sends bread.

Met, and changed

Three men, three temperaments. God corrected Peter, showed Thomas his wounds and fed Elijah. He didn't treat them as interchangeable, and he didn't remake any of them into the others.

He also didn't leave them where they were. Peter learned to stand up and speak with the Spirit's power. Thomas learned to say "my God." Elijah got up and walked forty days to the mountain.

FOR REFLECTION

1. Which of the three is most like you: Peter, Thomas or Elijah under the tree? What gave it away?
2. Name the temptation that comes with your temperament. When did it last get the better of you?
3. Elijah needed sleep and food before he could hear anything else. What do you need this week before you can hear God? Write down one thing you will do about it, and when.

Part Three: Brains That Work Differently

7. Wired Differently

For some readers, everything in Part Two will sound right and still miss something.

You aren't only quiet, or only restless. The lights in the sanctuary hum, and you can hear them through the whole sermon. The bass from the worship band hits your chest like a hand. Passing the peace means a wall of handshakes, perfume and faces too close to yours, and by the time you sit down you have nothing left for the prayer that follows. Or you love God, truly, and you still can't follow a forty-minute sermon to the end no matter how hard you try. You forgot small group again. You walked out of the service without the bulletin, your keys or any memory of the reading.

Maybe you took things literally as a child. Someone told you to ask Jesus into your heart, and you lay awake worrying about how he would fit. Maybe you asked questions that were honest and precise, and adults heard them as rude.

For many readers, none of this had a name until much later. You were called shy, spacey, stubborn, too much, lazy, rebellious or cold. You may have found out as an adult, in a doctor's office or from your own child's diagnosis, that there was another way to understand your whole life.

Where personality ends

Part Two was about temperament: preference and energy, the difference between a person who loves a crowd and one who needs a quiet room. Temperament matters, and it is also flexible. An introvert can get through a party and enjoy parts of it.

Some differences go deeper. They have to do with how a brain takes in the world and organizes it, and that line is worth drawing clearly, because blurring it leads to bad advice. Telling an autistic adult to come out of their shell, or an adult with ADHD to just try harder, misreads what is going on.

Autism involves differences in social communication and in how the senses process sound, light, touch and smell. Many autistic people need predictability and find deep focus in particular interests. ADHD involves differences in regulating attention and

activity, and especially in what are called executive functions: planning, starting tasks, keeping track of time, holding things in memory, managing impulses. The two often overlap. Both vary enormously from one person to the next. Both are diagnosed by trained clinicians, and many adults are only now getting assessed after a lifetime of wondering.

Neither one is a moral category or a spiritual condition. Both are ways a brain can be built.

What a Sunday costs

Much of church is designed, without anyone intending it, for a particular kind of nervous system. Loud music, bright lights, crowded lobbies, unexpected changes in the order of service, long stretches of sitting still and listening, a greeting time full of touch, a fellowship hour full of small talk. For some people, those are the best parts of the week. For others, they are a sensory and social bill that comes due before the sermon even starts.

Researchers have measured some of the cost. In 2018 the sociologist Andrew Whitehead looked at three waves of a large national survey of children's health in the United States, from 2003, 2007 and 2011-12. Compared with children who had no chronic health condition, autistic children had 1.84 times the odds of never attending religious services. Children with depression or anxiety, developmental delays, learning disabilities and ADHD also had higher odds. Children with asthma, diabetes, epilepsy or vision problems attended at the same rate as everyone else.

That study has real limits. It describes children, not adults, and parents answered the questions. The most recent data is more than a decade old. It shows a pattern without proving what caused it, and it doesn't compare different kinds of churches. But the contrast is hard to ignore. Families whose children had physical conditions kept coming. Families whose children's differences showed up in behavior and senses were more likely to stop.

Grant Macaskill, a New Testament scholar who leads a center for the study of autism and Christian community at the University of Aberdeen, argues that the barrier usually lies in the social habits that grew up around Christian teaching, such as the weight

placed on polished speaking, emotionally charged music and unstructured social time. Those habits can be examined and changed.

Two bad theologies

Neurodivergent believers often meet one of two explanations for who they are. Both do harm.

The first treats the difference as a spiritual problem. It is sin, or a lack of discipline, or a child who needs firmer correction, or in some churches a spirit that needs to be cast out. People have been prayed over to be fixed, publicly and repeatedly, and left believing their faith was too weak to be healed. If that happened to you, it was wrong, and it was not your fault.

The second sounds kinder. It calls autism or ADHD a superpower, a special gift, proof that God designed you for something extraordinary. It can feel good to hear, especially after years of the first message. But it can also become a new mask. It asks you to be impressive in order to be acceptable, and it has nothing to say on the days when your brain simply makes life hard.

Jesus met a version of the first theology in his own disciples. Walking past a man who had been blind since birth, they asked, “Rabbi, why was this man born blind? Was it because of his own sins or his parents’ sins?” (John 9:2).

He refused the question’s premise. “It was not because of his sins or his parents’ sins,” Jesus answered. “This happened so the power of God could be seen in him” (John 9:3).

That second sentence is easy to misuse, as if a person’s difference exists to be a lesson for other people. The text doesn’t say that, and it leaves a great deal unexplained. What it does say clearly is that nobody is to blame. Then Jesus stopped walking past the man and did something for him. The rest of the chapter is about religious leaders who couldn’t stand to see it.

Slow of speech

When God called Moses from the burning bush, Moses tried several excuses. The last one was about his mouth:

> *O Lord, I'm not very good with words. I never have been, and I'm not now, even though you have spoken to me. I get tongue-tied, and my words get tangled.*
>
> Exodus 4:10

Nobody knows exactly what Moses meant, and this guide won't guess at a diagnosis. What matters is what God did next. First he answered: "Who makes a person's mouth? Who decides whether people speak or do not speak, hear or do not hear, see or do not see? Is it not I, the LORD? Now go! I will be with you as you speak, and I will instruct you in what to say" (Exodus 4:11-12).

Moses still begged him to send someone else. The text is honest that God was angry (Exodus 4:14). And then, angry or not, he made an accommodation. He sent Moses' brother Aaron, who spoke well, to speak for him (Exodus 4:14-16). Moses would still lead. He just wouldn't have to do it in the way that was hardest for him.

God didn't pretend Moses' difficulty wasn't real. He didn't wait for Moses to overcome it first, either. He built help into the calling.

A seat at the table

After King Saul and his son Jonathan died, a five-year-old boy in their family was dropped by his nurse as she fled, and he was disabled for life (2 Samuel 4:4). His name was Mephibosheth. Years later, King David went looking for anyone left from Jonathan's family so he could show them kindness, and found him.

David gave him his grandfather's land and something more: "And from that time on, Mephibosheth ate regularly at David's table, like one of the king's own sons" (2 Samuel 9:11).

Mephibosheth's disability was physical, and the story says nothing about how his mind worked. It belongs here for one reason. The king didn't ask him to stop limping before he could sit down. The table made room for him as he was.

For parents

Some readers are here because of a child. Maybe the children's ministry director told you, kindly or not, that they didn't have a way to serve your son. Maybe your daughter melted down during the Christmas program and you could feel the room deciding

something about your parenting. Maybe you simply stopped going because the cost of every Sunday was too high.

You haven't failed your child, and your child hasn't failed God. Faith passed on at a kitchen table, in bedtime prayers and in a parent who keeps showing up is real faith. Some churches now train buddies to sit with children who need one, offer sensory-friendly services, or set aside quiet rooms. It is fair to ask about those things before you visit, and fair to keep looking until you find a place that says yes.

If you or your child are struggling with anxiety, depression, burnout or anything else that weighs more than you can carry, a counselor or doctor who understands neurodivergence can help. So can an assessment, if you have been wondering. Seeking that help is one of the ways God cares for his people. It is no failure of faith.

FOR REFLECTION

1. What parts of a typical Sunday cost you, or someone you love, the most? List three, as specifically as you can.
2. Which bad theology have you heard more often: that your difference is a spiritual problem, or that it is a superpower? Who said it, and how did it land?
3. God gave Moses Aaron. Who has been an Aaron for you, or who could be? Write down a name.

8. Setting Down the Mask

Chapter 2 described the masks many believers wear at church. For some readers, the mask goes much deeper. It isn't a Sunday habit. It is the way you learned to get through every room you have ever been in.

Researchers call it camouflaging. It includes forcing eye contact, rehearsing conversations ahead of time, copying other people's facial expressions and jokes, holding still when your body wants to move, and hiding the things you do to calm yourself. Many people who do it are so practiced that nobody around them has any idea, including, sometimes, themselves.

What researchers have found

In 2017, Laura Hull and colleagues in the United Kingdom asked 92 autistic adults to describe their experience of camouflaging. People said they did it to fit in, to make friends, to keep jobs and to avoid being bullied. Exhaustion was the cost they reported most consistently. Many also described anxiety, constant self-monitoring, and a sense of losing track of who they really were. The study was qualitative, built on people's own descriptions, and it wasn't designed to measure how common camouflaging is.

In 2019, Eilidh Cage and Zoe Troxell-Whitman surveyed 262 autistic adults. Those who camouflaged across more areas of life, and those who switched between camouflaging in some settings and not in others, reported poorer mental health. A 2018 study by Sarah Cassidy and colleagues, with 164 autistic adults, found that camouflaging was among the factors that predicted suicidal thoughts and behavior.

When the cost builds up long enough, some autistic adults describe what they call autistic burnout. In 2020, Dora Raymaker and colleagues, working with autistic co-researchers, interviewed 19 autistic adults and studied what autistic people had written online. They described burnout as chronic exhaustion, a loss of skills that had once come easily, and a lowered tolerance for sound, light and other stimulation. Participants pointed to life stress and a mismatch between what others expected and what they could sustain.

ADHD adults camouflage too. A 2024 Dutch study led by Wikke van der Putten compared 352 autistic adults, 123 adults with ADHD and 312 adults with neither. Adults with ADHD camouflaged more than the comparison group, though less than autistic adults.

All of this research has limits. Most of it depends on people describing themselves, often in online surveys. Much of it shows links without proving causes. Most of it comes from autistic adults, so it says less about ADHD. Still, the picture it paints will sound familiar to many readers. The mask works, and it costs a great deal to keep on.

Come away and rest

Jesus knew about being drained by crowds. Luke says plainly, "But Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer" (Luke 5:16). *Often.* It was a pattern, not an emergency measure.

He made room for his disciples, too. After they came back from a demanding stretch of ministry, "Jesus said, 'Let's go off by ourselves to a quiet place and rest awhile.' He said this because there were so many people coming and going that Jesus and his apostles didn't even have time to eat" (Mark 6:31).

Jesus built rest into the work itself. If you come home from church and need two hours in a dark room, that may simply be what your quiet place looks like.

All things to all people

Some readers will have heard Paul quoted against them. He wrote, "When I am with those who are weak, I share their weakness, for I want to bring the weak to Christ. Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22). Isn't that a call to fit in?

Look at what Paul is describing. He adapted by choice, out of freedom, for the sake of other people. He picked his moments. And when it came to who he was, he was famously unwilling to hide it. In the same letters he talks openly about his weakness, his fears and the parts of himself that didn't impress anyone.

That is different from the mask. Adapting because you love someone, for a while, with your eyes open, is a gift you can give. Hiding yourself all the time because you are afraid of what will happen if anyone finds out is a burden someone else has placed on

you. Paul never asked anyone to carry that.

Choosing who to tell

Setting down the mask doesn't mean taking it off in front of everyone at once. You don't owe your story to the whole church.

Even Jesus was careful about this. Early in his ministry, many people in Jerusalem believed in him, "But Jesus didn't trust them, because he knew all about people" (John 2:24). He shared himself most fully with a small circle.

Start there. Find one or two people who have shown they can be trusted with ordinary things, and try being yourself around them. Tell a pastor only if you have reason to think the pastor is safe. Let the rest of the church meet you gradually, or not at all. Choosing carefully who gets to see you takes its own kind of courage.

The Church has room

The Church has a long memory of people who didn't fit.

In eighteenth-century St. Petersburg, a young widow named Xenia gave away her house and possessions, put on her dead husband's military uniform and answered only to his name. Her relatives tried to have her declared insane, but officials found that she was within her rights. For decades she wandered the poor districts of the city, prayed through the nights in an open field, and was mocked by many. In secret, she carried bricks at night to help build a church. After her death, people came to her grave by the thousands. The Orthodox Church counts her among its saints, and calls her a fool for Christ.

This guide makes no claim about how Xenia's mind worked, and her story is mainly about grief and devotion. It belongs here because of what the Church did with her. It didn't require her to be ordinary before it would honor her.

Known before the mask

Long before you learned the mask, someone already knew what was under it:

> *O LORD, you have examined my heart and know everything about me. You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I'm far away. You see me when I travel and when I rest at home. You know everything I do.*
>
> Psalm 139:1-3

There is no performance that impresses God and no unmasked version of you that surprises him. He knows when you sit down and when you stand up, when you rock and when you pace, and when you lie on the floor of a dark room after church. He has never needed you to pass.

If the cost of masking has worn you down to the point of despair, please don't wait. In the United States you can call or text 988 to reach the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, any time of day or night. A counselor who understands autism or ADHD can help you find ways to live that don't require the mask all the time. Reaching for that help is one of the ways God cares for his people.

FOR REFLECTION

1. What does your mask cost you? Write down when you most feel the bill come due, and what it feels like.
2. Name one person you could try being a little more yourself around in the next month.
3. Psalm 139 says God sees you "when I rest at home." What does rest actually look like for you? Plan one hour of it this week, with a day and a time.

Part Four: Practice

9. Practices From the Whole Church

The Church has been praying in many different ways for a very long time. Monks read the same short passage over and over. Pilgrims walked winding paths in cathedral floors. Believers counted prayers on strings of beads, sang a single line until it settled into them, knelt, stood and lay face down on stone.

No practice here is the mature one. That matters more in this guide than in any other in the series. An extrovert and an autistic reader will probably choose differently, and both choices are good. Someone with ADHD may need a practice that moves. Someone who thinks in exact words may need one that stays with a single sentence.

If your mind wanders, you are in good company. Thérèse of Lisieux, a French Carmelite nun who died in 1897 and is honored as a Doctor of the Church, admitted in her autobiography that she often fell asleep during prayer. She decided not to be troubled by it: “I reflect that little children are equally dear to their parents whether they are asleep or awake.”

The practices below come from Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant believers, and from the Scriptures they all share. Think of them as a pantry, not a program. Choose one and try it for two weeks. If it doesn’t fit, set it down and pick another.

Practice	Rooted in	Time	Good for
Lectio Divina	Benedictine and Carthusian (Catholic)	15 min	Literal minds, slow readers
Beads in Your Pocket	The rosary (Catholic); Anglican prayer beads	10 min	Busy hands
Walk the Labyrinth	Chartres Cathedral, about 1200 (Catholic)	20 min	A body that can't sit still
Sung Prayer	The Taizé community (ecumenical)	10 min	Days when words won't come
Pray With Your Body	Psalm 95:6; Orthodox prostrations	5 min	People who think with their bodies
Two by Two	Mark 6:7	15 min, weekly	Extroverts, and anyone large groups wear out
A Sensory Plan	Mark 2:27; 1 Corinthians 12:22-23	One Sunday	Sensory overload

Lectio Divina

The phrase means "divine reading." Monks in the Benedictine tradition have practiced slow, prayerful reading of Scripture for many centuries. In the twelfth century, a Carthusian monk named Guigo II described it as a ladder with four rungs: reading, meditation, prayer and contemplation.

Choose a short passage, no more than a few verses. Read it slowly, out loud if you can. Read it again, and notice one word or phrase that catches you. Stay with that word. Turn it over. Then tell God what it stirred in you, in plain words. Finally, sit quietly for a minute or two without trying to do anything at all.

This practice suits people who notice exact words, people who need things to go in a predictable order, and people who are tired of being rushed through Scripture. One phrase, held carefully, is enough.

Beads in Your Pocket

Christians have used strings of beads or knots to count prayers since the early Middle Ages. The Catholic rosary, with its decades of prayers and meditations on the life of Christ, took shape over several centuries. Tradition links it to St. Dominic, though

historians doubt that attribution. In recent decades, Episcopalians in the United States have used a simpler set, often called Anglican prayer beads, with a cross and a loop of beads for short prayers or verses of Scripture.

You don't need a particular set. A short string of beads, a knotted cord or even a smooth stone will do. Choose one short prayer, such as "Lord Jesus, I'm here," or a line of a psalm, and pray it once for each bead as your fingers move. When your mind wanders, your hand will still be holding the place.

This is prayer for hands that need something to do. Many people who can't sit still find that a moving hand lets the rest of them settle.

Walk the Labyrinth

Around the year 1200, builders laid a labyrinth into the stone floor of Chartres Cathedral in France. It is about 42 feet across, and its single winding path runs more than 800 feet to the center. Some medieval Christians walked it as a small pilgrimage, and some, by tradition, on their knees.

A labyrinth isn't a maze. There are no dead ends and no wrong turns. The path is long and folded, but if you keep walking, it brings you to the center and back out again.

Many churches, retreat centers and hospitals now have labyrinths, painted on floors or laid out in gardens. If none is nearby, print a finger labyrinth on paper and trace the path slowly with your finger. Walk in carrying whatever is on your mind. Pause at the center and pray. Walk out ready to go back to your day.

This is prayer for a body that can't sit still, and for a mind that settles best while moving.

Sung Prayer

In 1940, a young Swiss Protestant named Roger Schutz settled in the small French village of Taizé, where he sheltered refugees during the war. The community that grew up around him now includes brothers from Catholic and Protestant backgrounds, and young people from all over the world come there to pray. Its music is simple on purpose: short lines of Scripture or prayer, sung over and over, often in several languages. Much of it was written with the French composer Jacques Berthier.

Find a recording of Taizé chants, or learn one simple line such as “Bless the Lord, my soul.” Sing it, hum it, or just listen, for ten minutes. Let the repetition carry you. Nothing changes suddenly, and nothing is expected of you.

This suits people who find long prayers overwhelming, people who like knowing what comes next, and anyone on a day when their own words won’t come.

Pray With Your Body

Scripture calls the whole body into worship: “Come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the LORD our maker” (Psalm 95:6). Christians have prayed standing, kneeling, lying face down, with hands raised and with heads bowed.

The Orthodox Church has kept bodily prayer especially close. During Lent, Orthodox believers make full prostrations, kneeling and touching their foreheads to the floor, as they pray a short prayer attributed to St. Ephrem the Syrian. On Sundays they traditionally pray standing, the posture of people who have been raised with Christ, a practice the Council of Nicaea affirmed in the year 325.

Choose one posture and use it on purpose for five minutes. Kneel by your bed, or stand with open hands. Lie on the floor and say nothing for a while. Notice what your body tells you about your prayer.

This suits people who think with their bodies, and people who have been told that real worship has to look a certain way. Your body is allowed to pray, loudly or quietly.

Two by Two

When Jesus first sent his disciples out, “he called his twelve disciples together and began sending them out two by two” (Mark 6:7). Nobody went alone, and nobody went as a crowd.

Ask one person to pray with you once a week, for fifteen minutes, in person, on the phone or by message. Share one thing you are thankful for and one thing you need. Pray for each other, out loud or in writing, whichever is easier for both of you.

Extroverts often need someone to pray with, and this gives them that. It also suits introverts and autistic believers who find large prayer groups exhausting, because one person is a very different thing from a room.

A Sensory Plan

Jesus said, “The Sabbath was made to meet the needs of people, and not people to meet the requirements of the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27). Worship was made for people, too. And Paul said the parts of the body that seem weakest “are actually the most necessary” (1 Corinthians 12:22).

Before your next service, make a plan for your senses. Find out what the service will include, and in what order, if the church posts it. Choose a seat away from the speakers, or near the back, where you can step out without crossing anyone. Bring ear protection, sunglasses or something for your hands, and use them without apology. Decide ahead of time when you will take a break and where you will go. If the greeting time is too much, it is fine to stay seated and smile. If a home group or an online service is what your senses can manage right now, that is still church.

Another guide in this series, *Finding Christ in the Land of Christians*, has a practice called “Come by Night” for anyone afraid to walk back into a church at all. This one is for the body that has to get through the service once you are there.

FOR REFLECTION

1. Which one practice will you try for the next two weeks? Write it down, with a day and a time.
2. Which practice did you assume was meant for someone else? What made you think so?
3. Two weeks from now, come back to this page. What did you notice about God, or about the way you are made, that you hadn’t noticed before?

A Benediction

You may have come to these pages tired from years of performing. You may have come as the loud one or the quiet one, the doer or the thinker, or as someone who only recently found the words for how your brain works.

Nothing here will make every church easy for you. But you know some things now. God put each part of the body just where he wants it. The quiet prayer and the dance both reached him. Jesus met Martha on the road and Mary in her tears, and he let Thomas touch his wounds. God fed Elijah before he said a word. He knew you before you learned the mask, and he isn't waiting for you to pass.

So go as you are, at whatever pace you can manage. And go with the blessing Paul gave a church full of people who didn't match:

> *May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you live in complete harmony with each other, as is fitting for followers of Christ Jesus. Then all of you can join together with one voice, giving praise and glory to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, accept each other just as Christ has accepted you so that God will be given glory.*
>
> Romans 15:5-7

Notes

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CHAPTER 1

Adam S. McHugh, *Introverts in the Church: Finding Our Place in an Extroverted Culture* (InterVarsity Press, 2009; revised and expanded ed., 2017). McHugh is an ordained Presbyterian minister who has served as a hospice chaplain and with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. The description of his argument here is a summary, not a quotation.

1 Corinthians 12:17-18. On the Corinthian church's ranking of spiritual gifts, see 1 Corinthians 12-14.

David J. Pittenger, "Measuring the MBTI... and Coming Up Short," *Journal of Career Planning and Employment* 54, no. 1 (1993): 48-52; see also Pittenger, "Cautionary Comments Regarding the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator," *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research* 57, no. 3 (2005): 210-221. The figure of "as many as half" comes from Pittenger's 1993 article, for retests at intervals as short as five weeks. The publisher's own manuals report higher stability for individual scales, and changes are most common on preferences that were close to the dividing line.

Ronald V. Huggins, "The Enneagram's False History and Occult Roots," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 179, no. 714 (2022). Huggins traces the first link between the Enneagram figure and the seven deadly sins to Oscar Ichazo around 1969, and dates the Enneagram of personality to 1971. Claudio Naranjo, who studied with Ichazo, developed the personality types further and taught them in the United States in the 1970s. This guide cites Huggins for the history only.

Tena Vukasović and Denis Bratko, "Heritability of Personality: A Meta-Analysis of Behavior Genetic Studies," *Psychological Bulletin* 141, no. 4 (2015): 769-785. The analysis combined 62 independent samples with more than 100,000 participants. The average heritability estimate was about .40. Heritability describes differences across a population. It does not mean that 40 percent of any one person's personality is fixed at birth.

On fit and harm, see *Finding Christ in the Land of Christians*, Chapter 9, another guide in this series.

CHAPTER 2

On *hypokritēs*: Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, s.v. ὑποκριτής, gives "one who answers, an interpreter" and "an actor, stage-player" for classical Greek, and "a dissembler, pretender, hypocrite" for biblical usage. Actors in Greek theater wore masks, and one actor could play several roles.

Matthew 6:1-18; 1 Samuel 16:1-13.

CHAPTER 3

On the problems in the Corinthian church: 1 Corinthians 1:10-12; 6:1-8; 11:17-34; 12-14. 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Romans 12:3-8.

The description of introversion and extroversion is a general summary of trait research. Introversion and extroversion are a continuum, and most people fall between the ends.

2 Corinthians 10:10; see also 2 Corinthians 11:6. Scholars differ on what lay behind the Corinthians' complaint about Paul's presence and speaking.

CHAPTER 4

Luke 10:38-42. In the Greek text of Luke 10:41, Jesus repeats Martha's name, "Martha, Martha"; the NLT renders it "My dear Martha." For the long tradition of reading Martha and Mary as the active and contemplative lives, see, for example, Augustine, Sermons 103-104, and Gregory the Great, *Homilies on Ezekiel* 2.2.

John 11:1-44; John 12:1-3.

Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection (Nicolas Herman, c. 1614-1691), *The Practice of the Presence of God*, Fourth Conversation. The conversations were recorded by Joseph de Beaufort, vicar general to the Archbishop of Paris. English translations vary; the sentence quoted here follows the common public-domain translation. The rest of that passage, about the noise of the kitchen, is paraphrased. The details of Lawrence's clumsiness and his dislike of kitchen work come from the same conversations.

CHAPTER 5

2 Samuel 6:1-23. On Michal and David's marriage, see 1 Samuel 18:20-28; 19:11-17; 25:44; 2 Samuel 3:13-16.

1 Samuel 1:1-20; Psalm 47:1; Psalm 131:2.

CHAPTER 6

Matthew 16:13-23; Mark 9:2-8; John 21:1-8; Acts 2:14-41; Galatians 2:11-14.

John 11:7-16; John 14:1-6; John 20:19-29. In the Orthodox Church the Sunday after Pascha is called Antipascha, or Thomas Sunday, and commemorates Christ's appearance to Thomas "after eight days" (John 20:26).

1 Kings 18:16-46; 19:1-8. The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline serves the United States.

CHAPTER 7

The descriptions of autism and ADHD here are general summaries for readers, not diagnostic criteria. Both are diagnosed by qualified clinicians, and both vary widely from person to person.

Andrew L. Whitehead, "Religion and Disability: Variation in Religious Service Attendance Rates for Children with Chronic Health Conditions," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 57, no. 2 (2018). The data came from the National Survey of Children's Health (2003, 2007 and 2011-12 waves). Reported odds of never attending religious services, compared with children with no chronic condition: autism spectrum disorder 1.84; depression or anxiety 1.73; conduct disorder or oppositional defiant disorder 1.48; developmental delay or learning disability 1.36; ADD/ADHD 1.19. Asthma, diabetes, epilepsy and vision problems showed no difference. Figures as reported in "Study: US Churches Exclude Children with Autism, ADD/ADHD," *Christianity Today*, July 2018. The data is parent-reported and cross-sectional, and the study does not distinguish between religious traditions.

Grant Macaskill, *Autism and the Church: Bible, Theology, and Community* (Baylor University Press, 2019). Macaskill directs the Centre for the Study of Autism and Christian Community at the University of Aberdeen. His argument is summarized here, not quoted.

John 9:1-41; Exodus 4:10-17; 2 Samuel 4:4; 9:1-13.

CHAPTER 8

Laura Hull, K. V. Petrides, Carrie Allison, Paula Smith, Simon Baron-Cohen, Meng-Chuan Lai and William Mandy, "'Putting on My Best Normal': Social Camouflaging in Adults with Autism Spectrum Conditions," *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders* 47, no. 8 (2017): 2519-2534. Qualitative study of 92 autistic adults.

Eilidh Cage and Zoe Troxell-Whitman, “Understanding the Reasons, Contexts and Costs of Camouflaging for Autistic Adults,” *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders* 49, no. 5 (2019): 1899-1911. Survey of 262 autistic adults.

Sarah Cassidy, Louise Bradley, Rebecca Shaw and Simon Baron-Cohen, “Risk Markers for Suicidality in Autistic Adults,” *Molecular Autism* 9 (2018): article 42. The study included 164 autistic adults and 169 adults from the general population. Camouflaging and unmet support needs significantly predicted suicidality among the autistic adults. The findings are correlational.

Dora M. Raymaker et al., “‘Having All of Your Internal Resources Exhausted Beyond Measure and Being Left with No Clean-Up Crew’: Defining Autistic Burnout,” *Autism in Adulthood* 2, no. 2 (2020): 132-143. The study used community-based participatory research with autistic co-researchers, 19 interviews with autistic adults in the United States, and posts written by autistic people online. It is small and qualitative.

W. J. van der Putten et al., “Is Camouflaging Unique for Autism? A Comparison of Camouflaging between Adults with Autism and ADHD,” *Autism Research* (2024). The study compared 352 autistic adults, 123 adults with ADHD and 312 comparison adults, using a self-report camouflaging questionnaire.

Luke 5:16; Mark 6:30-32; 1 Corinthians 9:19-23; 1 Corinthians 2:3; 2 Corinthians 12:9-10; John 2:23-25; Psalm 139:1-3.

On Xenia of St. Petersburg (18th century), see the Orthodox Church in America, “Blessed Xenia of St. Petersburg,” lives of the saints. Details of her life come from hagiographical tradition. The Russian Orthodox Church formally glorified her as a saint in the late twentieth century.

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline serves the United States.

CHAPTER 9

Thérèse of Lisieux, *The Story of a Soul*, chapter 8, trans. Thomas N. Taylor (1912; public domain). Thérèse was declared a Doctor of the Church in 1997.

Guigo II, *The Ladder of Monks* (*Scala Claustralium*), written in the third quarter of the twelfth century. Guigo was prior of the Grande Chartreuse from 1174 to 1180.

On the rosary’s development and the tradition linking it to St. Dominic, see Herbert Thurston and Andrew Shipman, “The Rosary,” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 13 (Robert Appleton Company, 1912). Thurston notes that none of the early lives of Dominic mention the rosary, and that both the repeated Hail Marys and the counting beads are older than Dominic. On Anglican prayer beads, see Kimberly Winston, *Bead One, Pray Too: A Guide to Making and Using Prayer Beads* (Morehouse, 2008), which reports that most users credit their creation to an American Episcopal priest.

On the Chartres labyrinth (laid about 1200; 12.88 meters across; a path of about 261.5 meters), see “Chartres Cathedral,” *World History Encyclopedia*. The tradition of walking it on the knees is reported, not documented in detail.

On the Taizé community, founded by Brother Roger (Roger Schutz) in 1940, see “A bit of history,” taize.fr. The first brothers made their life commitment on Easter Day, 1949.

The Prayer of St. Ephrem is prayed with prostrations on weekdays of Great Lent in the Orthodox Church. The twentieth canon of the First Council of Nicaea (325) directs that prayers be made standing on Sundays and during the season of Pentecost.

Psalm 95:6; Mark 6:7; Mark 2:27; 1 Corinthians 12:22. On “Come by Night,” see *Finding Christ in the Land of Christians*, Chapter 10.

A BENEDICTION

Romans 15:5-7.

Check-In Questions and Prayer Prompts

Take these slowly. Write in the Faith Journal or on the lines below. What matters is that each question gets an honest answer somewhere.

1 What were you told a mature Christian looks like?

Chapter 1 named the picture many churches carry. Write down the one you were given, and which parts of it never fit you. Then write one thing about the way you are made that you have treated as a defect.

PRAYER PROMPT

"Lord, I have spent a long time trying to look like someone else. Show me what you meant when you made me."

2 Where do you wear a mask, and what does it cost?

Chapters 2 and 8 describe the mask and its bill. Name the place where you wear it most, and when the cost comes due: Sunday afternoon, Monday morning, or somewhere else.

PRAYER PROMPT

"God, you already see behind it. Help me find one place where I can set it down."

3 Which person in Scripture is most like you?

Martha or Mary, David or Hannah, Peter, Thomas or Elijah under the broom tree. Write down which one, what gave it away, and the temptation that comes with your temperament.

PRAYER PROMPT

"Jesus, you met each of them as they were and didn't leave them there. Do that with me."

4 What does church cost your senses or your attention?

Chapter 7 described what a Sunday can cost. List the three hardest parts of a service for you or someone you love, and one change you could ask for or make yourself.

PRAYER PROMPT

"Lord, you made room at the table for Mephibosheth. Make room for me, and help me make room for others."

5 Which practice from Chapter 9 will you try for the next two weeks?

Write it down with a day and a time, like a labyrinth on paper or beads in your pocket. In two weeks, write what you noticed about God and about the way you pray best.

PRAYER PROMPT

"God, teach me to pray the way you made me, and to stop apologizing for it."

A Blessing for the Road

May the God who sees the wanderer find you wherever you are tonight.

May Christ, who never needed you to have it all together, meet you in the questions you're still carrying.

May the Spirit steady your feet when the noise gets loud, and quiet your heart when the world won't.

Go gently. Tell the truth. Love the ones in front of you.

And when you fall, and you will, may grace be the first thing you find when you get back up.

You're Always Welcome Here

If this helped, don't carry it alone. Write your answers in the Faith Journal, free and private. Share this with someone who's wandering. And come find us at faithoverfactions.com, on Substack, Facebook, Bluesky, and Instagram.

Faith Journal

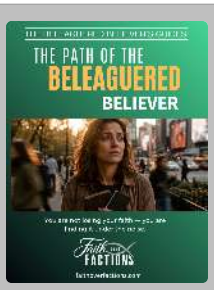
This piece online

The porch light is always on.

Take Something for the Road

You don't have to walk this alone, and you don't have to pay to keep going. Here are a few companions for the journey. All eight are free. No email address, no catch.

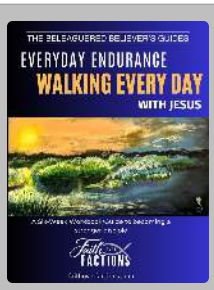
THE BELEAGUERED BELIEVER'S GUIDES



The Path of the Beleaguered Believer

"You are not losing your faith, you are finding it under the noise." For the one who keeps getting up.

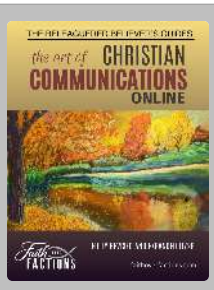
FREE DOWNLOAD



Everyday Endurance

Walking every day with Jesus: a six-week workbook for becoming a stronger disciple.

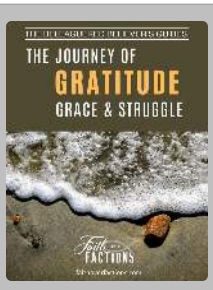
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The Art of Christian Communications Online

Speech that sounds like Jesus. For the one who hit send too soon.

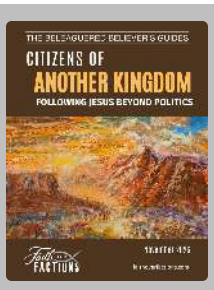
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The Journey of Gratitude, Grace & Struggle

You don't have to feel grateful to begin. You only have to turn toward the One who hasn't left.

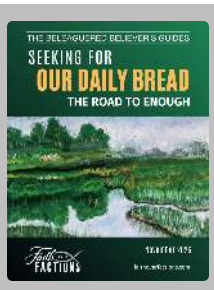
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Citizens of Another Kingdom

Jesus is Lord, and nobody else gets the title. For the one whose church picked a side.

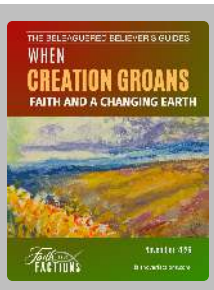
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Seeking for Our Daily Bread

Faith, debt and enough. For the one who was told to just trust God.

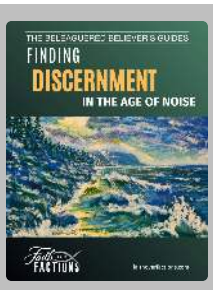
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When Creation Groans

The earth is the LORD's. For the one who was told it's all going to burn.

FREE DOWNLOAD



Finding Discernment in the Age of Noise

Test what you hear, starting with yourself. For the one who was lied to in church.

FREE DOWNLOAD

And a Quiet Place to Write It All Down

The Faith Journal is a private space for the questions in these pages, the prayers you mean, and the faith that doesn't fit neatly anymore. Write honestly. Share prayer requests only when you're ready. Free, private by default, no comment threads, no algorithm.

Grace and peace for the road.

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