

## Traditionalists

Following time-honoured spiritual traditions and practices. Loving God through ritual & symbol

### I feel closest to God when...

I practice spiritual traditions from my family or church background.

### To be spiritually renewed I need to...

Reconnect with the history, liturgy, or symbols of my spiritual tradition.

### It's especially helpful for me to connect with God through...

Using a Christian calendar or daily Bible readings and prayers.

### I benefit especially from speakers and authors who help me to...

Remember the stories and practices of Bible heroes and saints from the past.

**Structured** <-----> **Spontaneous**  
Traditionalist ... Naturalist

## Seeing Tradition in the Bible

Can you think of Bible characters or incidences that show this pathway?

Can you think of Christians you admire who fit this pathway?

## About this Pathway

These are the ways we use the physical world to express non-physical (spiritual) truths.

1. Ritual
2. Symbol
3. Sacrifice

### 1. Ritual or liturgical pattern

The power of rites is quite simply the power of reinforced behaviour. Rituals provide a way for us to enter into God's glory and still be protected from an experience that is too great for human experience.

Celebration & observances, Christmas, Easter, Lent, the church calendar

Scripture & spiritual practices, Daily readings, reading the Psalms, meditation on scripture, A habit or rule of prayer, Using liturgy, a prayer book scheduling prayer times

### 2. Symbol or significant image

Symbols can help us overcome one of the great difficulties of the Christian life the problem of a poor memory. And they bring poetry into our worship.

Just because we're saved doesn't mean we don't need help to live holy lives.

A cross, a fish sign, a pond you see daily, anything can be used to trigger actions (praying whenever you see it on the wall, driving carefully when you see the cross dangling from your mirror) Communion elements, symbols for the Trinity ....

### 3. Sacrifice

Fasting is an example. It doesn't earn us any extra merit points with God but God can use it to teach our humbled hearts. Other examples? Romans 12:1

## How to Live as Traditionalists

How, then, can you love God as a traditionalist? By incorporating the three elements of this temperament into your daily life: make plentiful use of symbols, develop meaningful rituals, and find areas of sacrifice.

## Temptations of Traditionalists

1. Serving God without knowing God. Without faith ritual is meaningless.
2. Neglecting social obligations. Not ministering to others.
3. Judging others. God not religion is sacred. Col 2: 16-17
4. Deifying rites. No symbol or ritual has value in itself, it represents a hidden reality.

### Questions

1. Which aspects of the traditionalist's path to connecting with God seem most helpful or intriguing to you? Which aspects seem least interesting?
2. How can developing the three elements of the traditionalist pathway enhance your awareness and worship of God?
3. Why do you think religion is usually thought of as a danger to intimate worship of God rather than as a pathway to intimate worship of God  
What are the marks of a religion that is divorced from true faith?
4. Read Exodus 12:21 —27. God was doing something momentous in the life of the Hebrew nation, freeing them from slavery in Egypt. He wanted them to memorialise this event as a true "God thing" in their history so that they would never forget his miraculous rescue.  
What ritual does he call them to? What symbol does he initiate? What sacrifice was involved?
5. Read Luke 22:7-20. Jesus' last meal before going to the cross was the Passover celebration at which he instituted a new memorial for his followers. What do the bread and wine symbolise?  
What are the parallels between the Passover shedding of a lamb's blood and Jesus' shedding of his own blood (see Isaiah 53 as well)
6. How could keeping a scheduled prayer time or adopting a rule of prayer help someone who has never learned how to pray? Are there any dangers in these two approaches to prayer? What are the potential benefits?
7. Do any of the temptations for Traditionalists resonate with you? If so, describe.
8. Why not create a traditionalist experience this week, such as attending a liturgical church service, praying according to a schedule or with a rule of prayer, or developing a few symbols that will be meaningful for you.

Clues to seeing Tradition in the Bible: the building of altars, the idea of the earth as a temple, God's commands regarding the Temple, Ezra, the disciples going to the Synagogue at regular times ...

For everyone: Consider these Spiritual Disciplines

<https://www.soulshpherd.org/spiritual-disciplines-list/>

Solitude, Silence, Fasting, Sabbath, Secrecy, Submission, Bible reading, Worship, Prayer, Fellowship, Personal reflection, Service

**Read** (to be challenged, comforted, provoked to argument, helped to grow ...)

Richard Foster's Celebration of Discipline

Brother Lawrence's The Practice of The Presence of God

Joel McKerrow's Woven (an artist remaking the faith he almost lost)

Brian McLaren's Generous Orthodoxy (or for more controversy the more recent A New Kind of Christian)

Henri Nouwen's In the House Of The Lord (an amazing unpacking of a short passage of scripture, you can do a whole term of Home Group studies from this little gem!)

<https://www.follow.org.au> for contemplation in a busy world