



Adam S. McHugh

## An Interview with Adam S. McHugh

### Why did you decide to write a resource for introverts?

**Adam:** To be honest, the book started out as somewhat of a self-apologetic. There were two unmistakable realities in my life: (1) I was called to be a leader in the church and (2) I was an introvert. But too often I experienced those two things as contradictory, and the book began as my way of trying to make sense of my call in light of my introverted temperament and vice versa. But as I thought about the topic and started talking with other introverts about it, I realized just how prevalent, and often how crippling, the struggles are for introverts in the church. So in addition to leadership, I expanded my exploration to include other central aspects of the Christian life, like community, spirituality and evangelism. My hope is that the book will help introverts both to find peace in their God-given personality preferences and to discover their places in their Christian communities, which so badly need their gifts and strengths.

### What are the qualities of an introvert that may be overlooked?

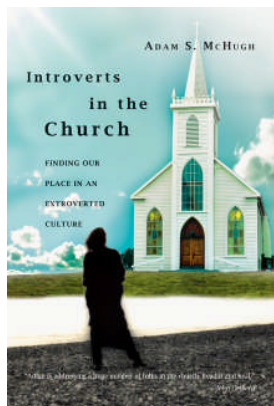
**Adam:** In short, I think *most* qualities of an introvert are prone to be overlooked! In our extroverted society, we value aggressive, action-oriented, gregarious people, and most introverts do not fit that profile. We are often calm, thoughtful, reflective types who may be invisible to others if they are not looking. I think that introverts have tremendous gifts to bring to others: in the book I discuss our listening abilities, creativity and imagination which come from our connection to our inner worlds, compassion, insight borne of self-awareness and listening, a peacefulness that spreads to others, and a servant mindset which is often expressed in behind-the-scenes service.

### Can introverts be in church leadership?

**Adam:** Absolutely. The reality is that introverts *are* in church leadership—I've seen studies that estimate anywhere from 25 to 40 percent of Protestant pastors are introverted, with an even higher percentage among Catholic priests. Perhaps the better question then is *how* introverts can lead in a way that is life-giving and natural. I think self-care is absolutely critical for introverted pastors and leaders, because my experience is that introverts in ministry are more prone to burnout than extroverts. We need to discover and embrace our rhythms of expending and restoring energy and to care for ourselves—souls, minds, bodies and intimate relationships—so that we can find joy and vitality in ministry and life.

# Q&A

## AUTHOR INTERVIEW



*Introverts in the Church:  
Finding Our Place in an  
Extroverted Culture*  
216 pages, paperback,  
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### How has being an introvert helped your ministry?

**Adam:** I have worked in a number of different ministry settings—in the church, in college campus ministry, and in hospital and hospice chaplaincy—and being an introvert has helped me in all of those roles. My listening abilities as an introvert are probably the greatest gift that I have to offer people, because in our culture people so rarely have the experience of being truly listened to—having their words, feelings and experiences taken seriously. I have developed the skill of listening not only to what’s said but also to what’s unsaid, to listen for the feelings, assumptions and questions that lie underneath what someone else is saying.

Many people are quite surprised when I tell them that my introversion has also aided me in preaching and teaching. My natural bent toward study, thoughtful reflection and writing—all things that come to introverts very easily—have all helped me develop as a preacher. I am very comfortable in the pulpit, as long as I am well prepared and have written out what I’m going to say beforehand. The fellowship hour after the service is another story though!

### How can introverts be evangelists?

**Adam:** As I was exploring this topic, I had someone tell me that an “introverted evangelist” is an oxymoron. But I firmly believe it’s not that introverts are ill-suited to evangelism; rather, many of our common strategies for evangelism are ill-suited for introverts. If we are going to continue to present evangelism as sort-of a spiritual salesmanship, introverts will struggle. However, if we develop new methods and new images for evangelism then I think introverts can feel much more comfortable. One of the things I suggest is that introverts, instead of radically stretching themselves to meet strangers in uncomfortable situations, should start with the seekers who are *already* in their lives and ask how God is *already* at work in them. Then, we can come alongside of our friends and partner with God in teaching and embodying the gospel of Jesus. I consider many of our gifts—especially listening and compassion—to be tremendous demonstrations of the nature and the presence of God.